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PC PLAYER

SIMULATION ADVENTURE STRATEGY

The only magazine for serious PC entertainment

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

SHADOWCASTER

ULTIMA VIII: PAGAN

INDYCAR RACING

STAR TREK: JUDGMENT RITES

ACES OVER EUROPE

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PC Player
Issue Two
January 1994
£2.25

Discover the ultimate in graphical adventuring as we test the 10 most popular point-and-click adventures in our definitive Super Test

POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURES

SUPER TEST:

10 OF THE BEST ADVENTURES

TESTED AND RATED

Sam & Max hits the PC just in time for Christmas. Is it really the best LucasArts adventure yet?

SAM & MAX

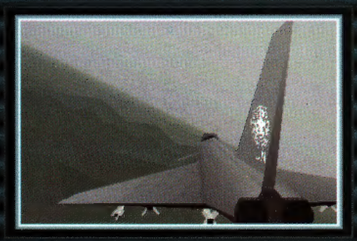
LUCASARTS HITS THE ROAD AGAIN

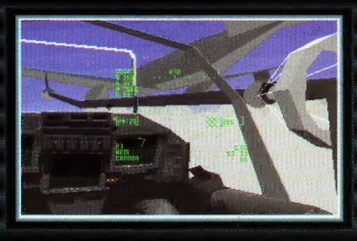
T F

THE CUTTING EDGE

"TFX boasts some of the most lavish graphics and code ever seen on the PC... D.I.D. and Ocean have come up with a masterpiece... detail is second to none, and while the game boasts some of the fastest and smoothest 3D ever the gameplay has not suffered. Superb! PC ACTION

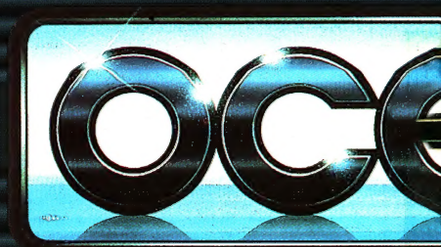
"The graphic detail is quite superb, with stunning visuals... TFX is quite often like watching a movie... when I first saw TFX my jaw dropped so far it took me 15 minutes to find it again! It's fast, good looking and fun." PC REVIEW





DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN

PC & COMPATIBLES . PC CD-ROM . AMIGA 1200 . CD32



TFX

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JOYSTICK - FRANCE

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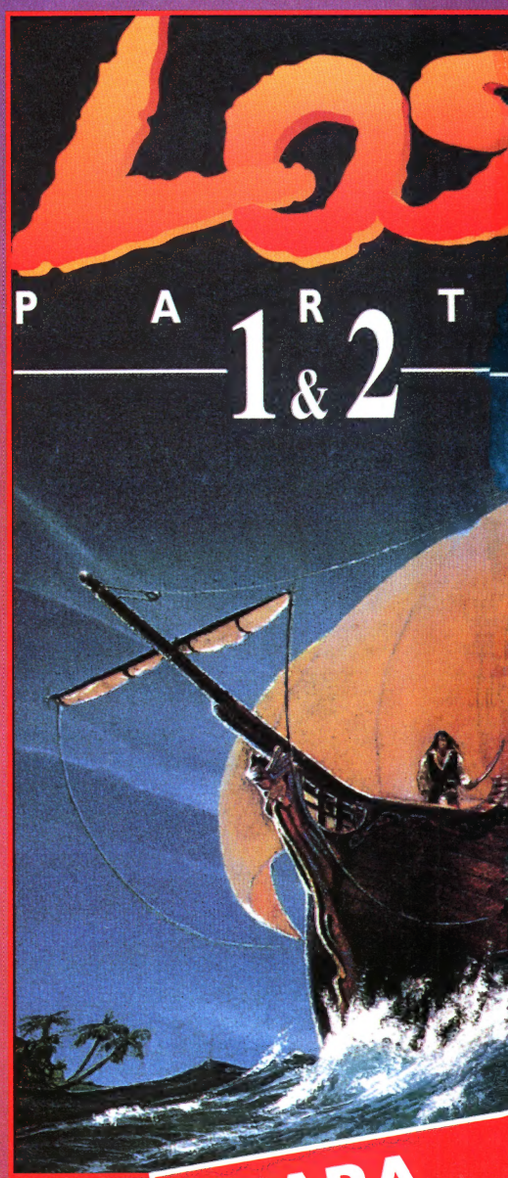

GUARA

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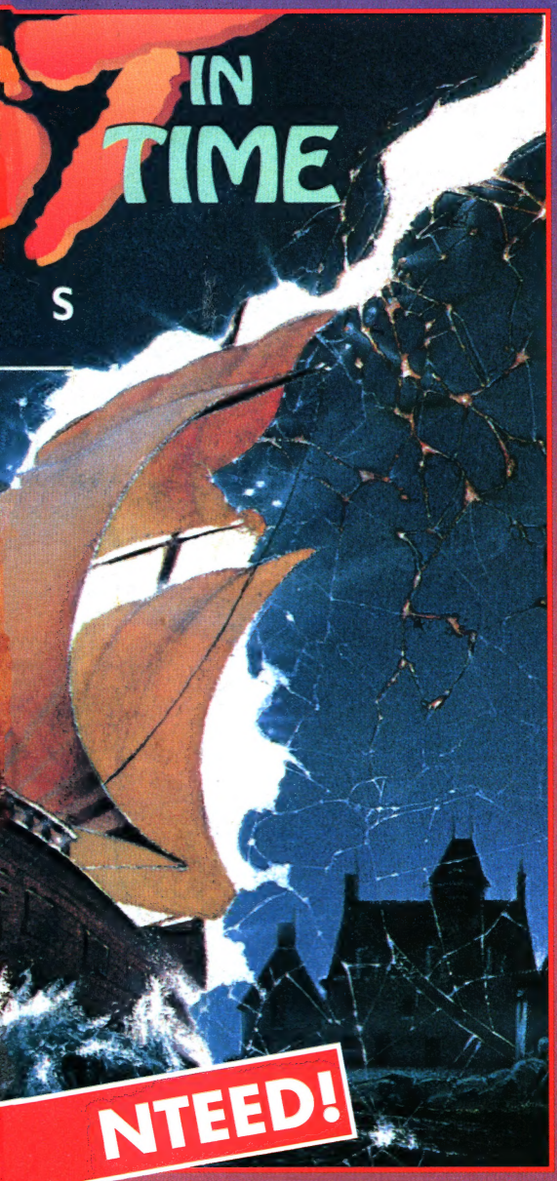
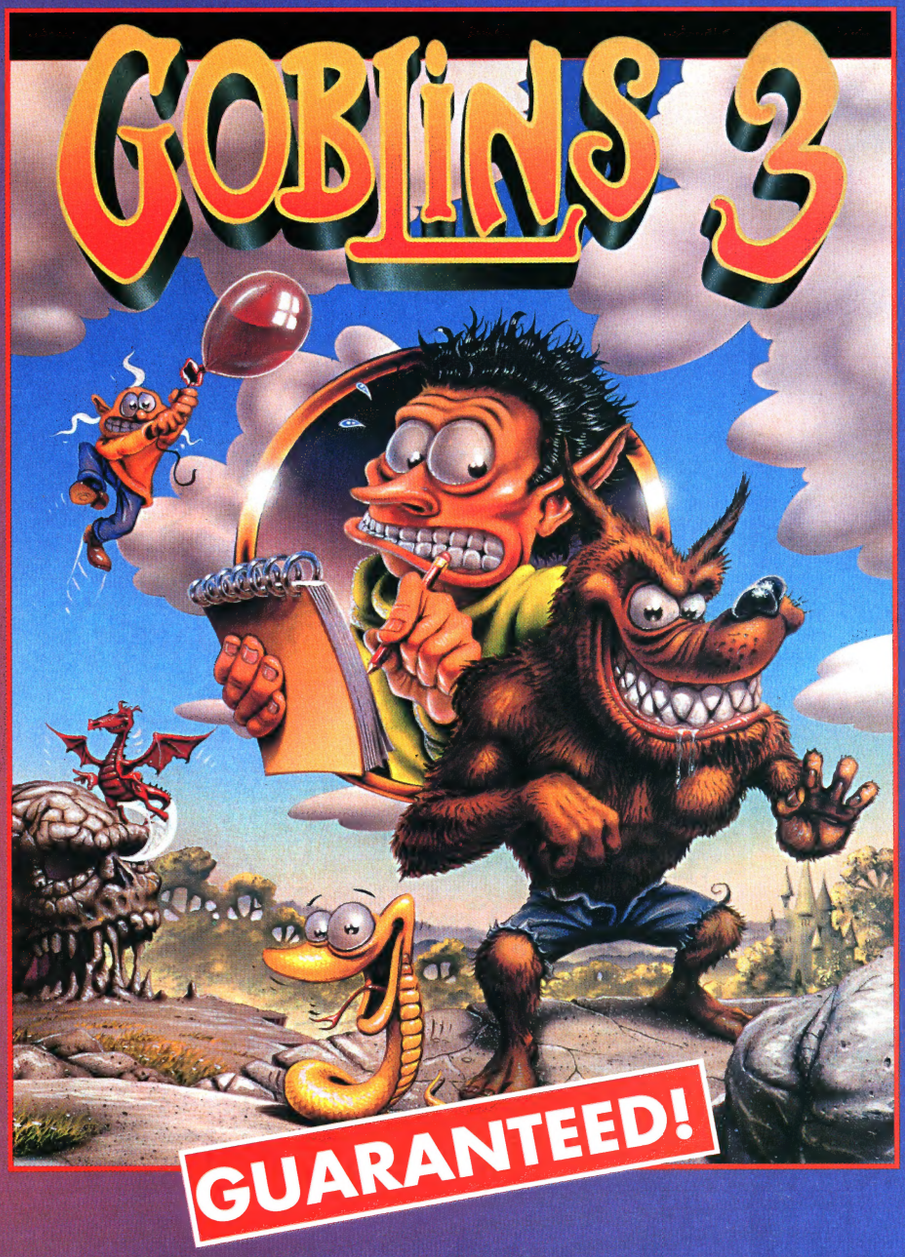
ADVENTURES...





presented, of graphics, ease of play".
PC PLAYER - UK

"Seems worthy of the best catoons".
GENERATION 4 - FRANCE

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This month's cover image has been illustrated by Steve Purcell, creative director and the brains behind Sam & Max

PC PLAYER

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PRINT:
Cradley Print, West Midlands

THANKS TO:
Bob Sidwick - RC Simulations
Malcolm Paxton
Tony Pearson - CSE Aviation
David Braben
Graham Lilley
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SUBSCRIPTIONS
Turn to page 112 for details of a special subscriptions offer available this month involving the highly rated flight simulator, TFX

CONTENTS

SIMULATION • ADVENTURE • STRATEGY

WELCOME TO PC PLAYER

THE reaction to the first issue of *PC Player* has been absolutely fantastic, it seems that our decision to produce something a little different has really paid off.

First and foremost is obviously the lack of a cover disk. Over the past few years it seems to have become commonplace for all computer magazines to have one of these obtrusive little blighters stuck to the front. Admittedly, on some of the more 'serious' magazines, the inclusion of a disk is often very useful for illustrating a point – however, with modern games being so vast the chances of ably demonstrating a state-of-the-art product on a single disk is virtually impossible.

By dropping the disk altogether we have managed to produce a magazine which not only homes-in on the more advanced PC games, but means we can also put it out at a reasonable price. Personally, I begrudge spending a fortune on a magazine accompanied by a disk (or sometimes even two disks) full of naff demos and crumby PD software. Why spend so much for what ends up being nothing more than a blank disk or an expensive coaster?

From the letters we've received so far, it appears that many of you agree. However, there are other ways of getting hold of demos of products. If anyone is interested, or has strong feelings on the issue, why not let us know how you feel? ■

THE PC PLAYER SCORING SYSTEM

EXCEPTIONAL	★★★★★
RECOMMENDED	★★★★
AVERAGE	★★★
POOR	★★
DIABOLICAL	★

CONTENTS

REGULARS

NEWS
Page 8

GAMES ROUND-UP
Page 84

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER
Page 110

COMPETITION: LUCASARTS
Page 13

COMPETITION: SAITEK JOYSTICKS
Page 92

COLUMN: ANGRY
Page 112

LETTERS
Page 114

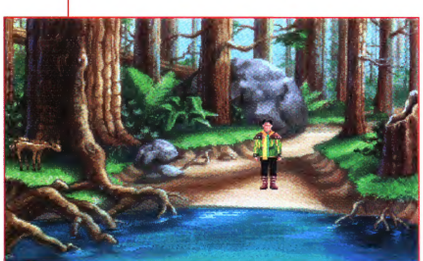
PAGE 13
Lookee what we have here! LucasArts, in collaboration with those generous guys and gals at US Gold, is going to make one PC Player reader very, very happy. The entire LucasArts range is yours, providing you can answer a few mind-numbingly easy questions. There are also a few highly fashionable T-shirts for those of you who don't win the games

PLAYERS' GUIDES

FREDDY PHARKAS
Page 104

KING'S QUEST VI
Page 106

PAGE 106
Sierra's King's Quest VI is by no means easy – bloody difficult is nearer the mark! Well, worry no more, because *PC Player* has delved deep within the game's puzzles and ripped out the solutions, artistically splattering them on the page for your perusal



PAGE 96
The ultimate Ultima instalment is upon us. The eighth episode, Pagan, will begin the end of the most respected role-playing series ever, incorporating an updated game engine and a more user-friendly control system

PREVIEWS

ACES OF THE DEEP
Page 100

FORGOTTEN CASTLE
Page 102

SSN-21 SEAWOLF
Page 94

ULTIMA VIII: PAGAN
Page 96

UNNATURAL SELECTION
Page 90

PAGE 78
Grab a needle and thread to sew up your ruptured belly after freelance detectives Sam and Max split your sides with laughter in this LucasArts follow-up to Day of the Tentacle. Based on the cult comic books by artist extraordinaire Steve Purcell, Sam & Max takes LucasArts' adventures another step forward with its greatly enhanced SCUMM game engine

REVIEWS

ACES OVER EUROPE
Page 70

ATC
Page 30

B-WING
Page 93

CLASH OF STEEL
Page 60

DRACULA UNLEASHED
Page 40

FANTASY EMPIRES
Page 64

FRONTIER-ELITE II
Page 42

INDYCAR RACING
Page 48

INNOCENT UNTIL CAUGHT
Page 86

KINGMAKER
Page 32

RALLY
Page 38

SAM & MAX
Page 78

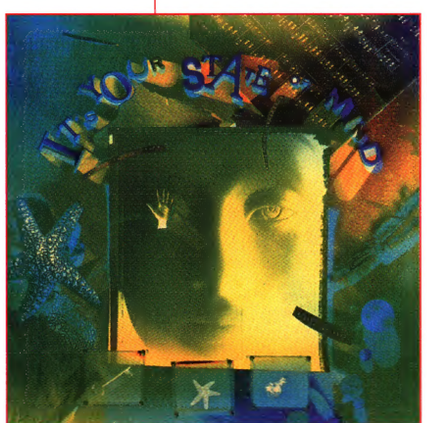
SHADOWCASTER
Page 54

STAR TREK 2: JUDGMENT RITES
Page 74

FEATURES

WESTWOOD STUDIOS
Page 24

POINT-AND-CLICK SUPER TEST
Page 16

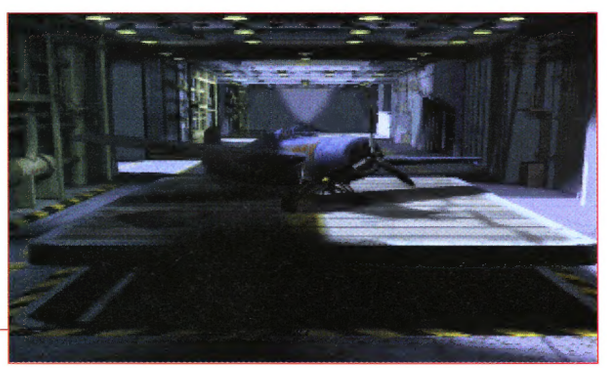


PAGE 24
Westwood Studios is the team responsible for the Fables and Fiends adventure series, which started life as The Legend of Kyrandia, followed by the excellent Hand of Fate due to be released next month. John Davison grabs his passport and poker-chips to head out to Las Vegas, home of the casino and the headquarters of Westwood

CONTENTS

PC PLAYER NEWS

PACIFIC STRIKE - LANDS OF LORE CD - CANNON FODDER - FLIGHT LIGHT - THE DIG - THEME PARK - PRIVATEER SPECIAL OPERATIONS - FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT - SIM CITY 2000



Pacific Strike – Origin

IT seems as though we can look forward to the delights of Origin's new flight simulator, **PACIFIC STRIKE** early in 1994. The title has been in development for some time, and although it uses the same graphics system as Strike Commander, we're assured that the system is now much faster. How? Not only has the code been revamped for the new game, Pacific Strike has another advantage over its predecessor – it's virtually all set at sea.

What this basically means is that there isn't an enormous amount of detail which needs to be shifted around the screen, there's just an awful lot of blue with some superbly detailed ships and planes scattered around. From what we've seen so far the graphics look astounding...are you surprised really? Thought not. Watch for a release early next year from EA.

Xanth – Accolade

NEWS

A new version of **SYNDICATE** should be hitting the shelves any day now, with the option to link PCs together across a network. Now eight syndicates can battle it out for world supremacy, with all the features offered by the original plus one new one, namely cloning. Players can genetically alter their agents to look like any other human in the game – turn your deadly assassin into virtually anything you want in order to confuse the opposition!

The CD-ROM version of **LANDS OF LORE** should be ready to ship just after Christmas. Although Lands of Lore is not dramatically different from the disk version of the game, the voice talent employed will certainly turn a few heads. Both Patrick Stewart (Captain Picard in Star Trek Next Generation) and actress Angelica Houston have been approached, although nothing has been 100 per cent confirmed as yet.

When quizzed about the project, Westwood Studios producer Rick Gush told us that "Video game production is getting closer to movie production – the use of well-known actors and actresses for character voices is something which we've been looking into for some time. The two industries are getting closer together these days and the possibility of a multi-million dollar game is not out of the question".

All being well, we'll be able to tell you the full line-up of talent for Lands of Lore CD in issue three of PC Player.

Legend is set to unleash a new adventure any day now through Accolade, but this time things are a bit different. In place of the Windows-esque text/graphic interface, the new game **XANTH** employs a completely new user interface. Similar in style to most point and click adventures, Xanth allows for total mouse control. It may be a little behind the times, but if Xanth can offer the quality of story-line and description which previous offerings have provided, then Accolade could be on to quite a winner. Watch out for a pre-Christmas release.

MICROPROSE has teamed up with **INTEL** for a new and unusual bundling deal. The firm is packaging three separate titles with an Intel accelerator chip, for $80. The deal will be available with either Formula One, Fields of Glory or Return of the Phantom. Previously the firm had a deal with Falcon 3.0 and the Intel maths co-pro.

Apparently, further collaborations may well go ahead in future months. Microprose's marketing manager, Rob Davies, is on record as saying "This is the second deal we've done with Intel. There are very few games which can utilise its maths processor, but Falcon was one of them so it came to us. These bundles are going into stores that sell a serious amount of hardware. Some of our games are very high-end and these shops have begun to realise that some of their customers and ours are the same, so there's a lot of synergy there".
Source: CTW 1/11/93.

CANNON FODDER, a controversial action war game from Sensible Software, is due to be released on the PC through Virgin early next year. The

Cannon Fodder – Sensible Software

(Top and Centre) Winter Olympics, (Bottom) Delta V – US Gold

cause of concern recently amongst British Legion charities, the game (and both Sensible and Virgin) has been coming under a certain amount of flak (no pun intended) due to its use of the poppy as a main image.

Already a storming success on the Amiga, Virgin has high hopes for the PC version of the game. From what we've seen so far, it looks a bit like a cross between Mega-lo-Mania and Seal Team with a sprinkling of North and South for good measure. Reports from the Amiga press has shown the game to be extremely addictive. We'll bring you more info soon.

US Gold's mega license deal **WINTER OLYMPICS** is not only set for a floppy release in January, but also a thoroughly enhanced CD version which will include some superb digitised visuals and sounds.

Events available include bob-sleigh, luge, alpine skiing, freestyle skating, ski jumping, cross-country, biathlon, ice hockey, figure-skating, speed skating and short-track speed skating. We're assured by US Gold that all of these events will incorporate photo-realistic graphics along with all the features you've come to expect from an Olympics computer game. We should be able to review the game just after Christmas.

Apart from the sporty side of things, it looks as though US Gold is set to have quite a busy time over the next few months. Both **REBEL ASSAULT** and **SAM & MAX** are scheduled for release at the beginning of December, whilst **DUNGEON HACK** (the newie from SSI), **DELTA V** (Bethesda) and **ARMOURED FIST** (from Novalogic) will all be out by Christmas. Keep an eye out for reviews next month in PC Player.

The really big news on the US Gold front is that the Steven Spielberg produced product from LucasArts, **THE DIG**, should be ready for release in the first quarter of 1994. Set at an archaeological dig on a distant planet, the game is apparently something which Spielberg "always wanted to do as a movie, but would never be able to afford". From the very early shots we've seen, the game is based on a development of SCUMM and will most likely be a CD-only product.

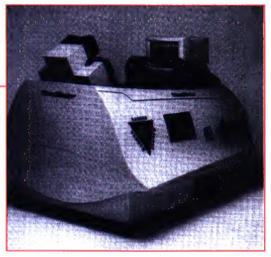
Flight sim buffs with plenty of room to spare will doubtlessly be thrilled to bits to find out that **THRUSTMASTER** has a whole host of new add-ons which are now being handled through RC Simulations (Tel: 0272 550900 Fax: 0272 411052).

Everything from basic cockpit modules and joysticks are available, right up to the pièce de résistance, the F-16C module with realistic seat, shoulder harnesses and fibreglass skin. All this stuff doesn't come cheap, as it has to be imported into the UK from the States. Dollar prices for the kit range from $695 for the basic sit-in unit, to $975 for the 'body shell' fighter cockpit mock-up. Anyone who is interested can receive a brochure by either calling the number above or writing to:

RC Simulations,
Unit 1B,
Beehive Trading Estate,
Crews Hole Rd,
St George,
Bristol.
BS5 8AY.

SubLogic is set to release a new advanced flight sim onto the market any day now in the shape of **FLIGHT LIGHT**. Designed to be a simple yet fully featured sim, the product allows you to fly a Cessna jet along flight corridors from New York to Boston, LA/San Diego, Chicago/Champaign and Dallas to Austin. Although it is not as advanced as its big brother, Flight Sim 5, Flight Light offers full instrument landing and navigational features which are more than enough to assist anyone wishing to experience the thrill of flying the real thing.

Employing a similar graphics system to FS5, the new product is made simpler with the aid of a new menu and help system which can be brought on line at any point to assist with problems.



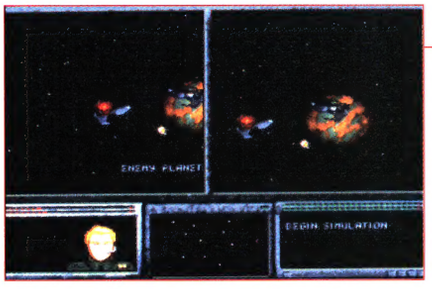
Thrustmaster – RC Simulations

No UK release date has been set as yet, although we're informed that a US release is expected in January. Watch for an in-depth review over the next few months.

Coming soon is the intergalactic trading/combat/adventure game **STAR REACH** from Interplay. Little is known about the product as yet, although we're told that Interplay is currently trying to dream up a name for the product (Star Reach doesn't really do the business apparently). Anyone with any bright ideas should drop us a line and we'll pass them on to the people at Interplay.

Empire is on the verge of launching the new Campaign title, originally titled **CAMPAIGN II**. The new game has an upgraded combat system and 3D model database and now includes 100 new post-war vehicle and weapon shapes. Animated infantry can be deployed and now, not only can you control all the land based vehicles on offer, you can fly helicopters as well. On the strategy side, Campaign II offers gameplay on a number of levels from individual platoon, division and regiment control to full campaign organisation.

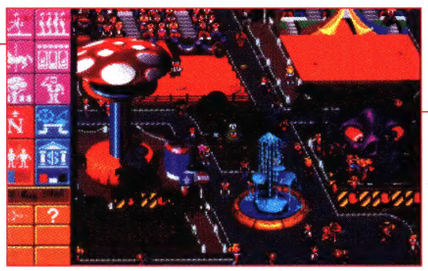
Campaign II is due for release before Christmas and from what we've seen so far, it's just about ready. Watch for more details next month.



Star Reach – Interplay

Campaign II – Empire

M3 HalfTrack
Front Armour (mm) 13
Side Armour (mm) 6
Rear Armour (mm) 6
Maximum Armour Penetration (mm) 0
Maximum Road Speed (km/h) 72
Maximum X-Country Speed (km/h) 30



(Top) Theme Park, (Bottom Left) Victory at Sea, (Bottom Right) Harpoon II – Electronic Arts

There has been a lot going on down at Electronic Arts recently, with news surfacing concerning the new game from Origin systems, among others. Origin's Richard Garriott (otherwise known as Lord British, the guy who was responsible for the Ultima series of games) is currently working on his first non-Ultima game.

As yet untitled at this early stage of development, Garriott's new game is being dubbed as being an "interactive movie". What this means isn't actually clear, as this kind of claim is banded about with alarming regularity, but we are told that it could be similar in style to the Infogrames game, Alone in the Dark. No release date has yet been set, but just as soon as more information becomes available, we'll be sure to pass it on.

Also from Origin comes the **PRIVATEER SPECIAL OPERATIONS** add-on disk. Containing many new missions, locations and ships, this extension disk simply bolts onto the original Privateer code in a similar way to the Strike Commander and Wing Commander add-ons. Available in December, this disk should extend the life of an already large game even further.

Fans of the strategy gaming genre will be disappointed to hear of the delayed release of two up and coming strategy games. **VICTORY AT SEA** and **HARPOON II**, both being produced by renowned strategy team, Three Sixty software, were pencilled in for a December release, but due to a few gremlins getting in on the act, that date now looks to have been put back to February or possibly March '94.

Set for release in early '94 is Bullfrog's new game, **THEME PARK**. After the amazing success of its last effort, the very cyberpunk Syndicate, Bullfrog has been beavering away putting the finishing touches to this Sim City-like game. Taking control of the aforementioned park, it's up to you to make a profit and keep the park running smoothly. Expect to see it around the end of January/beginning of February.

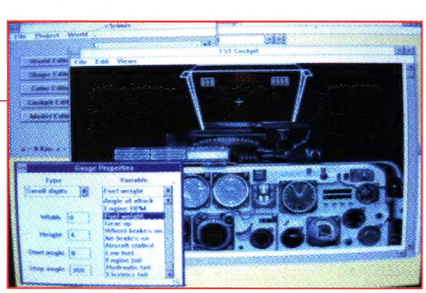
One of the most exciting software prospects lurking around the corner at the moment (especially if you're a big flight sim fan) is the release of the **FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT** from Domark. Working under the Windows operating environment, this clever piece of software will allow you to design your own aircraft, worlds and missions with total control over every aspect of the flying experience. Taking into account the complex mathematics involved in aircraft design, Domark promises that Flight Sim Toolkit will give the player one of the most realistic flight models available anywhere. Expect to see FST surfacing somewhere around January.

Football fans are also well catered for with **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER '94**, which should be available by the time you read this. An inspirationally named add-on disk for Championship Manager '93, this will provide all the necessary information to enable you to update your Championship Manager '93 disk with all the pre-season transfers, management changes, promotions and relegations that have occurred since the end of last season. Priced at £9.99, Championship Manager '94 should be out in the shops now.

Mallard software has plans to release **TOWER**, a slightly cut version of Tower Pro by Aviation Simulations Inc, which is a multi-screen professional PC-based tool used for teaching real Air Traffic Controllers. Featuring panoramic views of busy international airports, complete with digitised (photo-realistic) aeroplanes, Tower should be available by the time you read this.

SubLogic has plans to release **ATP**, its excellent commercial airliner sim, on CD-ROM in time for Christmas. Included in the package will be various scenery add-ons for the United States and Europe. Priced at £79.95, it is a sim that every flight sim fan should possess a copy of.

Another interesting bit of news – a cheap, **SPEECH RECOGNITION SYSTEM** is likely to appear by the end of the year. Priced at £19.95, it is a software product that works in conjunction with the Sound Blaster board and a microphone. Details are at present still a bit sketchy, but a call to Bob Sidwick at R C Simulations on 0272 550900 will provide you with more info.



(Below Left) Flight Sim Toolkit – Domark

(Centre and Right) Tower – RC Simulations

NEWS

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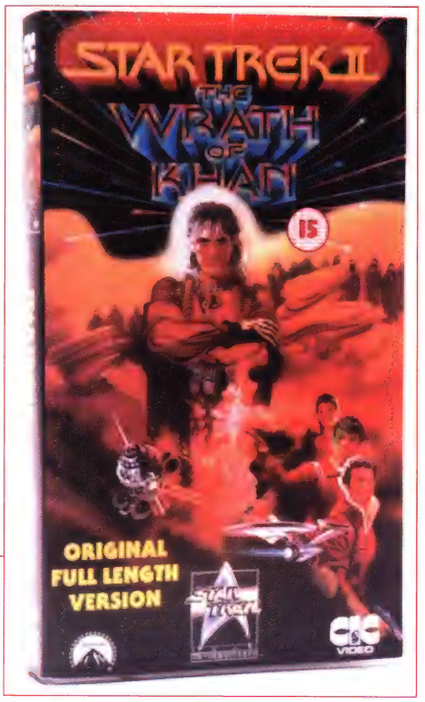


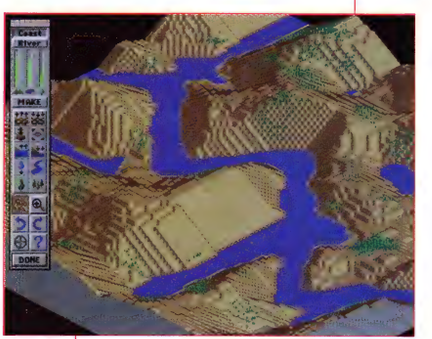
Star Trek 2: Judgment Rites – Interplay

Interplay is to release a special collectors edition of its Star Trek game, **STAR TREK 2: JUDGMENT RITES** (see review on page 74), complete with a copy of the best-selling Star Trek film The Wrath of Khan. Priced at £44.99, the box set of game and video will be available at the end of November.

PC chess programs seem to be appearing at an alarming rate at the moment, with the release of Kasparov's Gambit and soon **CHESSMASTER 4000 TURBO** from Mindscape. Powered by a 32-bit version of the chess engine that won the 1992 World Computer Chess Championships, Chessmaster 4000 Turbo introduces realistic opponent personalities, enhanced chess tutorials and multiple-player support over modems and networks. As seen in Gambit, there are libraries of opponents to play against, with the inclusion of an opponent creator. Designed to run under Windows, this should really give chess players something to sink their teeth into. Chessmaster 4000 Turbo is available now on floppy disk, with a CD-ROM for Windows version appearing in the second quarter of 1994.

Ever wondered what happened to the granddaddy of the home computer, Clive Sinclair? Well, he's alive and well and along with his son, Crispin, has set up a mail-order firm with a slight twist. If, upon receiving a game, you are dissatisfied with it for any reason, then simply send it back for a full refund.

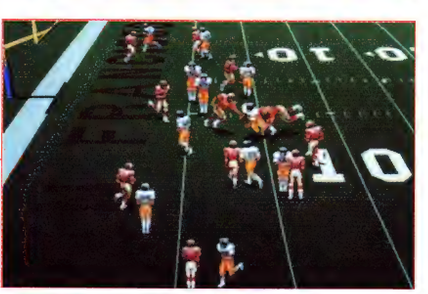
SINCLAIR DIRECT can be contacted on 071 263 3529.



(Top and Above) Sim City 2000 – Maxis

Having signed a deal with the NFL allowing it to use real players and player statistics, Accolade is soon to release **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS**, an American football game that will make use of rotoscoping and the SVGA format to produce some incredible graphics. Players will be allowed to view the game and stadium from any angle and from any location, guaranteeing some spectacular views of the game in progress. Expect to see it in the shops in December.

(Below) Genesia – Mindscape



(Right and Far Right) Unnecessary Roughness – Accolade

Role-playing fans are in for a treat with **GENESIA**, the new RPG from Mindscape. Developed by Microids, it's an isometric 3D adventure that has you cast as a hapless adventurer. Utilising hi-res VGA graphics and a unique viewpoint, it looks very reminiscent of early 8-bit classics such as Knightlore and Fairlight. Expect to see Genesia at the end of January or beginning of February 1994.

Sim City fans (such as myself) are going to be wetting themselves come the new year, for it will herald the next generation of computerised city building in the form of **SIM CITY 2000**, courtesy of sim expert, Maxis.

Apparently, this new Sim City game will incorporate over four years of customer suggestions and combines dozens of new features such as schools, bridges, museums, hospitals, universities, freeways, waterfalls, bays and so on. The display is now seen from an 3D isometric viewpoint, viewed from any angle. Underground railways and subways are also being included into the running, and as if they weren't enough to keep you occupied, as the mayor you're also responsible for the city's underground pipe and cable network!

Sim City 2000 has been slightly delayed, but keep your eyes open around February time for this potentially stunning addition to the 'Sim' series of products. ■

NEWS

WIN EVERY LUCASARTS PC TITLE, COURTESY OF US GOLD

COMPETITION

TO HAVE A CHANCE OF WINNING THIS SUPERB PRIZE, YOU MUST FIRST ANSWER THESE THREE SIMPLE QUESTIONS AND COMPLETE THE TIE-BREAKER:
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"I WOULD LIKE THE ENTIRE LUCASARTS COLLECTION BECAUSE..."

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YES, you read that correctly – *PC Player*, in conjunction with US Gold, is offering the stunning prize of the ENTIRE LucasArts range of games for the PC, plus a few extras!

LucasArts is in the enviable position of being one of the most respected development houses in the world. Its huge breadth of programming and design talent has produced such classic games as X-Wing, Day of the Tentacle, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis and many, many more.

Maybe you have a LucasArts game in your collection, but would like to own the lot? Let's see...that's **15** titles in total, which include:

- **REBEL ASSAULT (CD-ROM)**
- **X-WING**
- **IMPERIAL PURSUIT**
- **B-WING**
- **SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD**
- **DAY OF THE TENTACLE**
- **INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS**
- **INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE**
- **MONKEY ISLAND 2; LE CHUCK'S REVENGE**
- **THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND**
- **ZAK MCKRAKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS**
- **LOOM**
- **AIR COMBAT CLASSICS**
  (Which in turn contains Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe, Battle of Britain and Battlehawks 1942, plus mission disks!)

Five runners-up will also walk away with their very own LucasArts Entertainment T-shirt. ■

All entries on a postcard to: SMART LUCASARTS COMPETITION, *PC Player*, 16-17 Hollybush Row, Oxford. OX1 1JH.

Closing date: 1st January, 1994.

The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into (unless we feel like it, of course). Get entering, because you've got to be in it to win it!

If you're stuck with any of the questions, try reading through the mag – you never know what you may find...

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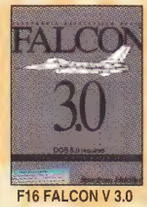

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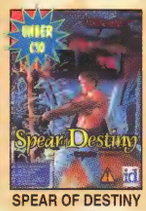

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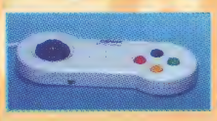

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SUPER TEST

FEATURE

point & click ADVENTURES

SOME SAY IT'S RUDE TO POINT, BUT TRY TELLING THAT TO THE PC POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE GENRE. FOLLOWED BY THOUSANDS, AND PLAYED BY MILLIONS, THESE INTERACTIVE, GRAPHIC ADVENTURES HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR MANY YEARS, and BUT IT HAS ONLY BEEN RECENTLY THAT THE MARKET HAS RIPENED TO BURSTING POINT. WE PUT 10 OF THE LATEST AND GREATEST POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURES TO THE *PC PLAYER* SUPER TEST.

by John Davison, Keith Sloan, Paul Mallinson, Alex Simmons

All of the games featured in the Super Test exhibit strikingly different graphical styles. Many use digitised illustrations for backdrops, but well-drawn computer graphics can also be very impressive

The graphics in Day of the Tentacle as you can see here, are quite superb. Everything is colourful and bold, with some superb animation on the main characters. Add to that some stunning backdrops and DOTT proves to be in a class of its own

IT wasn't long ago that the humble adventure game consisted of only descriptive text, outlining all your locations and puzzles in nothing more than the written word. Zork, Planetfall and Spell Bringer (not to mention all the other Infocom classics) were the definitive text-only adventures that had games players the world over enthralled. Nowadays, all this has been superseded with the introduction of more powerful computers, better graphics and the introduction of sound. As a result, the humble adventure game remained humble no longer.

It was now considered standard to incorporate graphics into the game, along with the text input, so making the whole experience more rewarding. As time went on, the keyboard became more and more redundant, finally culminating in the point-and-click adventure that we are all familiar with today. Mouse control ruled the roost, and as a result adventure games started to appeal to even the most hardened arcade player.

"WITH SO MANY ADVENTURE GAMES OUT THERE AT THE MOMENT, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT"

With so many adventure games out there at the moment, it's almost impossible to know what's hot and what's not. That's why we've taken a cross-section of adventures that represent the most popular, playable and state-of-the-art games in this genre and pitted each of them against their contemporaries. In this, our second Super Test, we aim to give you all the information you need to make an informed judgement.

PRESENTATION

DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★★

Regardless of how ingenious the puzzles are, if an adventure cannot convey the feeling of the game through the graphics and the general aura, then the chances are that you won't want to venture any deeper into the fold than perhaps the first puzzle.

The top of the pile as far as graphics are concerned has got to be Day of the Tentacle (DOTT). Thanks to the incredible speech, and the iMUSE (intelligent music) system that automatically matches the music to the characters' actions it looks and sounds like a cartoon, and the atmosphere of the game is conveyed perfectly. The backgrounds are visually stunning, and the character sprites are bold and colourful – as far as graphical perfection goes, DOTT is as close as it gets.

Almost as good looking come two other LucasArts titles, Monkey Island II and Indiana Jones. Both make use of some extremely high quality backgrounds, but the character sprites are much less bold than DOTT.

The Sierra games have always been associated with atmospheric graphics, and nowhere is this more notable than in Laura Bow II. The backgrounds are evocative of the 1920s, and have been hand-painted and digitised to capture the mood beautifully.

Freddy Pharkas and King's Quest VI, although having some excellent graphics, don't capture the mood as well as Laura Bow II, possibly because they're representing two periods of time that had a lot less character. Space Quest V on the other hand doesn't have to portray anything that resembles reality, and the suitably futuristic graphics do go some way to capturing the imagination in a way that neither Freddy or King's Quest manage.

One thing that has to be said of all the Sierra games though is that the character sprites are small and ill defined, and look out of place when set against the games' stunning backgrounds. Compare this to the sprite animation found in Rex Nebular, and the faults become apparent. The animation in Rex N is stunning, with the characters moving fluidly through the game world.

Simon the Sorcerer and Legend of Kyrandia are similar in presentation, with bright, bold backgrounds, but only adequate sprites. Kyrandia even goes so far as to commit the cardinal sin of not scaling the sprites as they walk into the screen.

ENTERTAINMENT

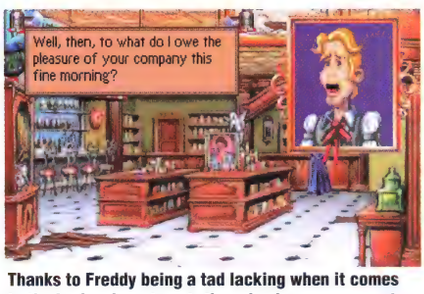
DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★

The real test of an adventure game is how enjoyable it is to play. The adventures on test here ranged from the brilliantly logical DOTT, to the obscure and annoying Space Quest V.

At the lower end of the scale are, surprisingly, the Sierra games – King's Quest VI, Laura Bow et al require you to spend too much time wandering around locations waiting for things to happen that you have no control over, such as other characters interacting only when you are in the right place at the right time. The puzzles also appear to require more luck than judgement, which is something that an adventure game does not need.

DOTT, Indy and Monkey Island all make use of LucasArts' intelligent cursor system to enhance already excellent adventures. Comparatively, this system knocks any other interface into a cocked hat, and as a result the games are much more enjoyable, with everything being easier, and the frustration of not knowing what to do with an object being eliminated. ➤

Puzzles abound in Indiana Jones, but none of them are of the 'try-everything-in-the-hope-that-it-works' vein. All are logical and easily worked out with the right amount of brain-power. Another nice feature of the game is that there are three different routes available, which gives the game a lot more scope



Thanks to Freddy being a tad lacking when it comes to the brains department, there is always some sort of joke going on at his expense. Add to this the fact that he looks about as intelligent as your average goldfish, and it's a fair bet to say that this game relies on very warped humour!

FEATURE

DAY OF THE TENTACLE

PRODUCT
Day of the Tentacle

SOFTWARE HOUSE
US Gold/LucasArts

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

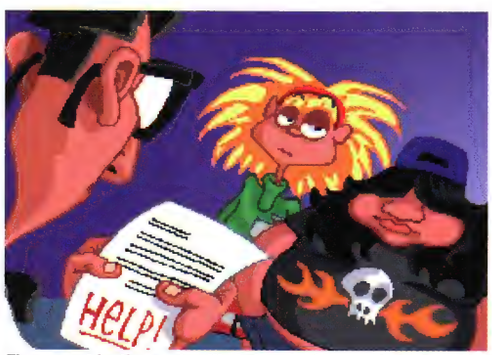
There are few games around which can truly be judged as hard to fault, and Day of the Tentacle (DOTT) is one of them. It is yet another adventure utilising the revolutionary SCUMM (Story Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) and iMUSE systems to create an interactive story unlike any other.

Picking up where the ancient Maniac Mansion (which is included as part of the package) left off, DOTT puts you in the unusual position of having to control three different characters: geeky Bernard, thrash metal roadie Hoagie and medical student Laverne. They must all work together as they try to prevent the mutant Purple Tentacle's world take-over bid.

Travelling through time, the three characters find themselves in different time zones – the present, 200 years in the past and 200 years in the future – where they must solve puzzles in order to help each other out. By interacting with characters and 'flushing' objects through the Chrono-john time toilets the trio must thwart the mutant Tentacle's reign and thus put the humans back in control of the world.

One of the only games to emerge to truly deserve the description as an interactive cartoon, Day of the Tentacle is filled with quirky humour and demonstrates some of the best graphics yet seen in an adventure game.

If you've got a CD-ROM, you could do far worse than get hold of a copy of Day of the Tentacle on CD with its superb spoken dialogue.



These must be the most unlikely bunch of heroes to be found in any adventure game. Laverne, Hoagie and Bernard hold the fate of the world in their hands. It's a scary thought, isn't it?

FREDDY PHARKAS – FRONTIER PHARMACIST

PRODUCT
Freddy Pharkas – Frontier Pharmacist

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Sierra-On-Line

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

Freddy Pharkas appears in his first adventure which is a wild 'n' wacky romp through the Wild West and the diseases that proliferated at the time. Created by Al Lowe, the guy behind the Leisure Suit Larry series, Freddy Pharkas displays a truly inane sense of humour and a pocketful of methane to boot. I say methane because a huge proportion of the story revolves around farting horses and deadly asphyxiation! Thankfully this is all done in typically humorous bad taste (we wouldn't have it any other way) which had the entire team on our backs!

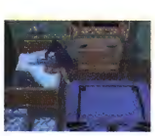
As with many of the other Sierra adventures, Freddy Pharkas suffers from illogical puzzles and linear gameplay that tends to restrict progress. Some of the more complex puzzles are bloody difficult to say the least, and the fact that you usually have to solve one puzzle to progress further into the game holds the proceedings up regularly. This has a tendency to infuriate rather than stimulate.

Pharkas uses the digitised backgrounds extremely well. It's a pity that the animated figures throughout the game are quite indistinct and blocky

That said, Freddy Pharkas certainly does have its novel touches, for example, creating various pharmaceutical remedies while consulting the hilarious Health and Hygiene book is great fun...and a clever game/manual protection method too. Graphically, Frontier Pharmacist is superb with wonderfully drawn digitised backdrops complementing the rather blocky sprites. The finger-lickin' banjo and blues harp solos provided by the soundtrack are atmospheric and racy too.

It is not quite as addictive as chewin' tobacco, but a lot better for your health!

FEATURE



There are two ways to play Rex Nebular – either in the restricted mode, or with all the gore and smut available. After becoming stranded on a planet inhabited only by women, it's a fair bet that the unrestricted mode will win through!

➤ Rex Nebular is a game that is enjoyable to play thanks to its humour and graphics. In the naughty mode, there is gore, smut and lots of innuendos. The humour really shines through, and the game manages to strike the right balance between being easy enough to draw you in, but having the right amount of depth to keep the adventure going. Legend of Kyrandia is also an easy game to play, but unfortunately it's a little too simple for its own good because the fun starts to wane after a relatively short time. Simon the Sorcerer is the unexpected grower of the group. It's a simple game that makes use of a good interface, contains its fair share of humour – although more slapstick than Rex N – and has enough graphical touches to make you want to go that little bit further.

ATMOSPHERE

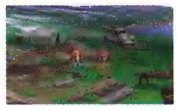
DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★★

After puzzles, possibly the next most important variables in an adventure game are atmosphere and characters which help to draw the player into the world of the adventure and make them believe that what's going on is actually happening somewhere in a parallel universe.

DOTT contains everything that makes a good adventure. The story is funny and interesting, the characters elicit an empathetic response from the player and the atmosphere is very nearly perfect, being set by incredible graphics, crystal clear speech and musical effects. It's not only this game that manages it though because most of the LucasArts' releases have much the same effect. Both Indy and Monkey Island revolve around superb stories that intrigue and excite, and include characters that are unique. In the case of Indy, the fact that he is already familiar as a hero of a film helps to push the character to the forefront of the imagination, and that helps to draw the player in.

Laura Bow II features an exciting story, but the main character is just too 'flat' with no link existing between the player and the character under control. This means you don't feel obliged to get in there and help sort out the problem because the character just isn't believable enough. This problem features heavily in all the Sierra games – the background story is very good and at first it is strong enough to carry the rest of the game, but it soon

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS



PRODUCT
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

SOFTWARE HOUSE
US Gold/LucasArts

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

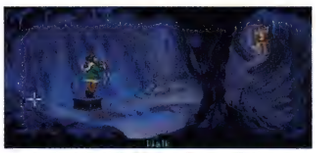
PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

Widely accepted as one of LucasArts' finest moments, Indy shows how a computer game can expand on themes introduced in the cinema. By using the Indy character and thrusting him into a totally original adventure, the game manages to generate a superb atmosphere which captures the essence of the movies wonderfully.

The year is 1939 and the Nazi agents are about to get their hands on what is potentially more dangerous than any weapon ever devised – this is Orichalcum, a substance even too powerful for the technologically advanced inhabitants of Atlantis. In his quest to stop the Nazis from destroying everything, Indy must travel through more than 200 locations which take him from Monte Carlo to the Sahara and eventually to Atlantis itself.

One of the most unique features about this is the option to play the game in one of three different modes: the Fist Path where Indy fights his way through, the Wits Path where you must solve puzzles, or the Team Path where Indy joins forces with sidekick Sophia to defeat the Nazis.

This is one of the most playable adventures around because it provides multiple routes with different puzzles to think your way through. Watch out for the recently released Indy talkie released on CD-ROM which is the same game, but all dialogue is fully spoken.



Just what is this bloke doing all the way out here in Iceland? Has he found something useful or is he here for a chin-wag?

You may recognise a few locations from the Indiana Jones films. Indy's office is recreated just as you see it in the movies

KING'S QUEST VI: HEIR TODAY GONE TOMORROW

PRODUCT
King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Sierra-On-Line

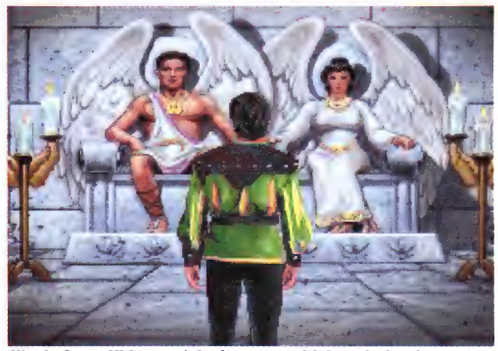
REQUIREMENTS
386X, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster Sound Card

Roberta Williams' sixth King's Quest game is without a doubt the biggest adventure from the Sierra stable yet. Graphically far superior to any of the previous King's Quest adventures, this latest game expands enormously on the theme and introduces a whole new host of characters. Take a look at the screen shots shown here, and you'll no doubt agree that this is one of the best-looking adventures around. The digitised painted backdrops are consistently excellent, while the animation of all the characters is superb.

You play the part of a shipwrecked prince as he finds his way across a series of islands in search of the girl of his dreams. A beautiful princess is imprisoned in a far-away tower and it's your job to set her free. Encounter hellish monsters and terrible demons as you use all manner of magic to complete your quest. The interface is possibly the friendliest yet, while the level of character interaction is far greater than in any other Sierra adventure.

Highly acclaimed when originally released a few months ago, the game has recently received a further boost in the form of a superb CD-ROM version.



King's Quest VI is very 'nice' – a sort of fairy tale for the hardened adventurer. Thankfully most of the puzzles are fairly straightforward, but there are a couple which are a bit unusual to say the least

Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow uses the same icon system as the previous Sierra adventures. Toggle through the icons with the right button or move the mouse to the top of the screen to view the inventory

PAGE 19

Freddy Pharkas is a great game and it had us in stitches here at the office. It is however sadly let down by completely illogical solutions to puzzles. If you think that you are up to a real challenge, this game comes highly recommended

becomes a pain to have to fight with the character to get them to do what you want, how you want it done.

Rex Nebular and Simon the Sorcerer are games that have a humorous story-line, and then build around it with characters that fall into the middle ground between the type found in DOTT and Laura Bow. Although not stunning, both games are fun to play because you always want to see what is going to happen next.

Rex is especially fun because the hero is playing the part that every red bloodied male would like to play – a man stuck on a planet populated entirely by man-hungry women. Compared to these two, The Legend of Kyrandia falls by the wayside because the story is poor, the characters are uninteresting and the whole thing just feels wrong.

PUZZLES/LOGIC

DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★

If you've played many of the Sierra adventures, you'll probably have noticed that they all have something in common – the puzzles can become extremely illogical and obscure at times. Now everyone loves a complex puzzle to solve but there's a limit to every extreme. Freddy Pharkas falls down due to its highly illogical solutions, for example, making the gas mask in order to survive the equine flatulence is a very strange process. King's Quest VI, Space Quest V and Laura Bow II all suffer from this dehabilitating disease.

On the other hand, the puzzles in the LucasArts products are the pinnacle of ultra-cool. Day of the Tentacle must surely rate as one of the most cleverly designed games ever because the puzzles are intricately interwoven throughout the duration of the game and all contribute towards a final solution, rather than simply allowing slow progress through a linear game path. Although the puzzles may not be too obvious, Day of the Tentacle is one of those games that makes you sit up and realise just how clever the game design is. Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis is more of the same – the puzzles and logic are just so damned good you can't fault them, and at no point did I ever become frustrated with the logic of these games.

Rex Nebular is host to numerous devious puzzles, but these too are well-constructed and logic-fair. ➤

One of the best features about Fate of Atlantis is that the puzzles are so well designed. They may not be easy, but they can be figured out without constant use of a helpline!

FEATURE

LAURA BOW- THE DAGGER OF AMON RA

PRODUCT
Laura Bow II – The Dagger of Amon Ra

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Sierra-On-Line

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA or EGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

The Laura Bow adventures have proved to be very popular among the adventure gaming fraternity, combining some beautiful graphics with exciting and challenging plots. In The Dagger of Amon Ra, the second in the series, Laura Bow undertakes a reporting job with some smaltzy New York tabloid and soon finds herself embroiled in the search for the ancient Egyptian dagger.

The first part of the game takes place in and around New York. You have to take cabs to various locations around the city sniffing out clues and getting ready for the big charity gala being held in the museum. When you've completed a few important tasks, such as finding a magnifying glass and a new dress for the gala, you are then allowed access to the party where the clues, as well as a fair number of dead bodies, start piling up.

Relying on the now familiar Sierra point-and-click interface to manipulate objects and interact with the other characters in the game, Amon Ra offers a challenging adventure. The characters strolling around the locations are varied enough for many interesting conversations to take place, and the fact that the museum has a few hidden secrets of its own just adds to the intrigue. It's also very nice to look at, with the 1930s' decor and feel having been captured beautifully by the hand-painted backgrounds. All in all, one of Sierra's better efforts.

Aich, you are shmelling like ze brewery, mein Kaptain! Either you've been drinking, or you've been eating too many of zose grapes!

One of the most daunting characters in the game is the German security guard. There's something not right about him!

The graphics in LBII really are superb. In the police station you can even see the leaflets on the notice-board

THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA

PRODUCT
The Legend of Kyrandia

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Virgin

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA or EGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
386, Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

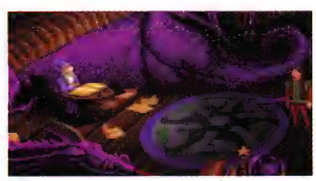
The Legend of Kyrandia is the first instalment of the Fables and Fiends quests and is comprised of four separate quests which gel together to make one massive adventure. It's set in the mythical world of Kyrandia where Brandon, the hero of the game, must find the wizard Malcolm and rip his lungs out. Why? Because Malc turned Brandon's father into a garden statue, that's why.

Unlike many of the new generation LucasArts and Sierra adventures, Kyrandia has fairly basic backdrops rather than digitised masterpieces. A lot of the scenery is repeated, either copied exactly or simply flipped to create a so-called new location.

The puzzles are extremely simple to begin with and don't really get much harder until the second or third quests are reached. The gameplay gradually introduces you to its way of thinking, which is a fault many other games slip up on.

Cursor-manipulation is far simpler than the other games in the point-and-click genre, but not necessarily better because it's often difficult to work out how to use an object, or what to do it.

The Legend of Kyrandia is available on disk but can also be found on the more impressive CD game which is sonically very good.



Listen carefully to each of the characters because they often tell you the solution to a puzzle

The Legend of Kyrandia doesn't have a box of icons like most of the adventures, instead it uses a cursor which changes to an arrow wherever an exit appears. This sometimes causes problems when trying to work out which objects can be interacted with

➤ Virgin's Legend of Kyrandia is, in some ways, far too logical for its own good. We found the game to be far too easy – the answers to problems are sometimes given away effortlessly. Kyrandia would probably be more suited to any entry-level adventurers wanting to test the water.

INTERFACE

DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★★★

FEATURE

If you're lucky enough to own a CD-ROM drive, then playing a full-blown talkie version of one of these games will add an extra dimension to interaction. All of the games featured allow complex interaction between non-player characters (in the case of Tentacle, between three player characters) and various useful objects. An effective game interface is essential for maximum enjoyment.

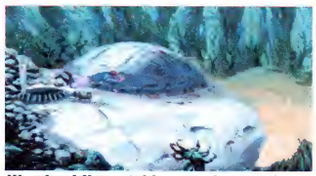
At the bottom end of the interaction scale we have Virgin's Kyrandia which is a game devoid of many essential point-and-click features such as the smart cursor and the action icons. Kyrandia simply offers a lone pointer with no object indication and limited interaction. If you click on an item on the CD-ROM version, you have to wait for the speech to finish before you can continue – there is no way of skipping through it all – this isn't a problem however in the text-only version.

The other titles featured in this Super Test possess a mixture of interactive engines ranging from above average to outstanding. It shouldn't take a genius to fathom out which games feature outstanding front-ends...yes, that's right, the LucasArts titles. The LucasArts SCUMM interface is a wonderful system that has ripened to perfect fruition in Day of the Tentacle. Previous SCUMM titles such as The Fate of Atlantis and LeChuck's Revenge are both excellent titles in their own right, being very simple to get into and clear and concise in execution.

Simon the Sorcerer tries hard to emulate the SCUMM system but falls a mite short in places – the lack of the intelligent right mouse action button is one major difference. Hot keys would have improved the situation, but even they are missing from the game. Rex Nebular is plagued by the same problem – having to move the pointer to the bottom of the screen to click on the action icon soon becomes tedious after repeated use.

The LucasArts SCUMM interface is currently the best system on the market and Day of the Tentacle utilises the latest version. Object manipulation and character interaction become quick and intuitive once you've learned the ins and outs of the system

REX NEBULAR AND THE COSMIC GENDER BENDER



Way-hey! I'm outside my submerged spacecraft and I can swim from location to location. The animation on Rex has to be seen to be believed

Rex Nebular is Microprose's first step into the point-and-click adventure field and what a good one it is too.

You control the actions of the bumbling hero, Rex Nebular, a galaxy-hopping adventurer-among-the-stars. Your mission is to recover a valuable artefact from a mysterious planet, and solve various puzzles in order to find your way out of this intergalactic mess. You begin the game inside your crashed ship (Rex is a bit green when it comes to landing) and must use anything you can pull out of the wreckage to aid you.

Unfortunately the planet that Rex has crash-landed on is inhabited by bizarre alien women with certain earthly desires and instincts – this can result in a few fatal encounters along the way. Certain situations within Rex Nebular could be seen as being pretty risqué – semi-naked women, lewd language and graphic violence ensure that there are two different modes of display, one for adults and one for parents. I suggest you crank it up to full naughtiness for the best effect.

Microprose has developed a graphics adventure system of its own called MADS (Microprose Adventure Development System) which works extremely well and does the trick as far as the gameplay is concerned. Graphics and animations are stunning, see Rex swimming to see what we mean, and the game is an absolute hoot to boot! Rex Nebular comes highly recommended.

PRODUCT
Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Microprose

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, Adlib Sound Cards

SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE

PRODUCT
Secret of Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

SOFTWARE HOUSE
US Gold/LucasArts

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, Adlib Sound Cards

The original Monkey Island set standards in point-and-click adventures, but Monkey Island 2 is still considered to be THE classic PC adventure. The blend of puzzles, humour and adventure is superbly executed and the rich variety of characters manages to create a gaming environment that you don't want to leave.

You have to follow the adventures of good ol' Guybrush Threepwood as he picks up after beating the horrific LeChuck. Get drunk, enter phlegm-spitting competitions, defeat terrible tyrants, desecrate graves and generally cause mayhem in this, one of the wackiest adventures around.

The SCUMM and iMUSE systems really come into their own in this game, which is possibly one of the easiest adventures to get into. None of the puzzles are ludicrously difficult, while the whole game (like all the other LucasArts adventures) is a good collection of interconnected puzzles which lead to a common goal. You can't get killed, you can't really do things wrong and pretty much every object you find has some use.

Two years old and still going strong. What more can you say?

A fully-fledged map of Scabb Island can be called up at any time. Clicking on a chosen area will move Guybrush towards it

Sierra adventures approach the user-interface from a different angle. Instead of a row of action icons that are clicked on before manipulating an object, the mouse pointer is left to do all the work. Pressing the right mouse button cycles through various icons (unfortunately not intelligent). This leaves the screen display uncluttered and simple, which is definitely a bonus for the Sierra stable.

LINEARITY

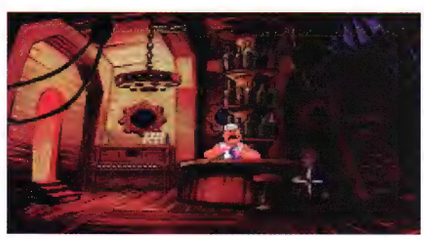
DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★
LAURA BOW II	★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★

In Day of the Tentacle, the concept of time and paradox is used to create a plot that jumps from one place to the next as you solve the puzzles. This approach allows the player to concentrate on certain problems in any order, for example, an object needed much later into the game could quite easily be retrieved early on and saved for later use. A system such as this doesn't allow the player to become bored because there's so much to do and see, and you're never confined to a limited number of screens with a vague and difficult puzzle blocking your path.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis also scores very highly in this category, if not only for the fact that any one of three different paths can be taken to complete the game. In effect this means you have three games in one, so when you've completed the game it's back to the beginning to finish it differently! Fate of Atlantis also changes certain elements every time you start a new game meaning every attempt is different. Take the search for the Nazi camp in the desert for example, one time you could be flying around in a hot air balloon to find it, another time you could be on the back of a camel hoofing through the sand dunes.

All three of the LucasArts products are essentially the least linear of the 10 games featured here and that is as close a guarantee of satisfaction as you can get (said in typical R&M fashion).

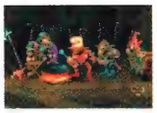
Without meaning to go too far into the Sierra Vs LucasArts trap, it has to be said that there is a definite design difference between their respective products. Sierra adventures usually possess fairly linear gameplay, for example Freddy Pharkas is comprised of a number of sequential acts each of which have a puzzle that must be completed in order to progress onto the next stage. Now this isn't a major game fault because the program has obviously been designed this way, I do however much prefer the LucasArts non-linear approach. ➤



Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge is split into separate story sections that all contribute towards a final goal which is the removal of LeChuck from the island

Freddy Pharkas on the other hand is split into separate acts that must be completed sequentially to finish the game

FEATURE



SIMON THE SORCERER

The graphics used throughout Simon the Sorcerer are of a very high standard, being very 'middle Earth' in appearance. There are a multitude of creature characters for Simon to interact with, and all are given the same graphical treatment which makes the game very pleasing to the eye

PRODUCT
Simon the Sorcerer

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Adventure Soft

REQUIREMENTS
286, 570k, VGA/MCGA, Mouse, 10Mb Hard Drive

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib, Roland Sound Cards

Simon the Sorcerer is one of those games that doesn't receive the recognition it deserves, partly because it's from a small British company, and partly because all the thunder was taken away from any game in this genre by Day of the Tentacle.

You take control of Simon, the young boy who unwittingly gets thrust into a magical world inhabited by wizards and monsters. As is usual in these kinds of situations, the only person capable of whisking you back into your own world is a wizard, in this case called Calypso, who has quite inconsiderately been kidnapped. It's up to you to progress through the game, solving puzzles and problems as you do so.

The strength of Simon lies in the humour of the game. All the way through there are characters that come out with some very funny lines, and the whole look of the game has been tailored towards this. It's fairly easy to get into, but don't let that fool you into thinking that this game is a pushover. Graphically excellent, Simon the Sorcerer is a game that deserves to be included with the best that the genre has to offer.

The majority of adventures available nowadays rely on a few problems to help pad them out a bit. For example a stranger asking for help necessitates the need for a mini quest to be undertaken. That's OK, so long as they are done well, as in Simon the Sorcerer

SPACE QUEST V: ROGER WILCO THE NEXT MUTATION

PRODUCT
Space Quest V: Roger Wilco the Next Mutation

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Sierra-On-Line

REQUIREMENTS
286, 640k, VGA, Mouse

PC PLAYER RECOMMENDS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

The adventures of Roger Wilco continue further as Roger finds himself getting through the Starcon Academy before gaining his first command, as captain of the garbage scow, Eureka.

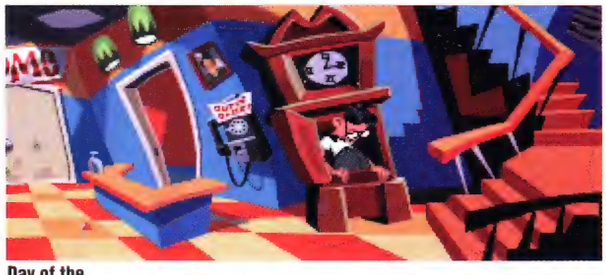
Star Wars, Star Trek and numerous other great works of science fiction all see the sharp end of Roger's wit as sections are 'borrowed' from a number of familiar sources. Initially mildly amusing, the Space Quest series seems to be running out of steam and although the presentation and some of the ideas in this, the fifth outing of Space Quest, are very good, the overall design and interface is a little old-fashioned.

There are numerous puzzles to bend your mind around, ranging from simple spatial reasoning to basic arcade-ish (OK, they're not that arcade-like) sections. The story-line, which centres on a mysterious genetic mutation, only manages to get really interesting right towards the end. There are some clever twists in places, but on the whole it's all fairly predictable stuff.

Those of you who are big fans of the Sierra-style adventure will no doubt love this, but to the rest of us, at least it's a damn attractive-looking game.

The amount of characters that can be interacted with during the game is very large. Most of them will only engage in a spot of idle chatter, but a few could hold the key to solving the adventure...if you're really lucky

One of the most user-friendly aspects of Space Quest is the ability to change the control icon. Simply clicking on the right mouse button will cycle through the available actions, making the journey through the game a lot easier



Day of the Tentacle, without a doubt, reigns supreme over the point-and-click domain. A well-deserved full marks in every section ensured its crowning glory

CONCLUSION

DAY OF THE TENTACLE	★★★★★
FREDDY PHARKAS	★★★
INDY, FATE OF ATLANTIS	★★★★★
KING'S QUEST VI	★★★
LAURA BOW II	★★★
LEGEND OF KYRANDIA	★★
REX NEBULAR	★★★★
MONKEY ISLAND 2	★★★★
SIMON THE SORCERER	★★★★
SPACE QUEST V	★★★

FEATURE

It's funny just how different games of the same style can become. Tentacle and Rex Nebular are both of the same genre, but each presents their case in a different manner. The various Sierra games fit into, and work extremely well within their own particular niche, it's just a pity that illogical puzzle solutions drag a product down from being an excellent game to just a good one. This is where the Sierra games lose out to the LucasArts adventures.

As you can see from the final score, there are two top-rated adventures: Day of the Tentacle and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis. These two games stole the spotlight. There's no denying that Tentacle is a real crowd-pleaser and will continue to be for quite some time yet, but when you consider just how old Fate of Atlantis is, you really begin to understand just how advanced the LucasArts SCUMM system has become over the past few years. LeChuck's Revenge is also over two years old and look how well that fares against newer titles.

If you've played any of the LucasArts adventures, then you could do far worse than many of the other games mentioned here. The point-and-click adventure genre has been blessed by an air of quality with the standard of presentation being outstanding and a fun factor which is very high.

What do we have to look forward to in the future? Well, LucasArts' newest duo, Sam & Max, will be hitting our monitors some time in November, and that sure looks like one to watch out for – take a look at the preview on page 92. Virgin has Beneath the Steel Sky (complete with Dave Gibbons' artwork) and the sequel to Kyrandia, The Hand of Fate. Sierra-On-Line has Gabriel Knight – Sins of the Father, Police Quest IV and Quest for Glory III ready for release, and Interplay should please the thousands of Trekkie fans out there with Star Trek: Judgement Rites.

When the future's this bright – you gotta wear shades. ■

For lewd laughs and a whole lot of fun try Microprose's Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender. Rex is a sort of digitised Amazon Women on the Moon game...complete with breasts!

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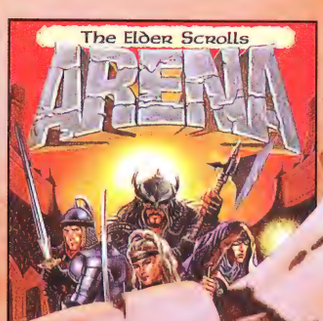

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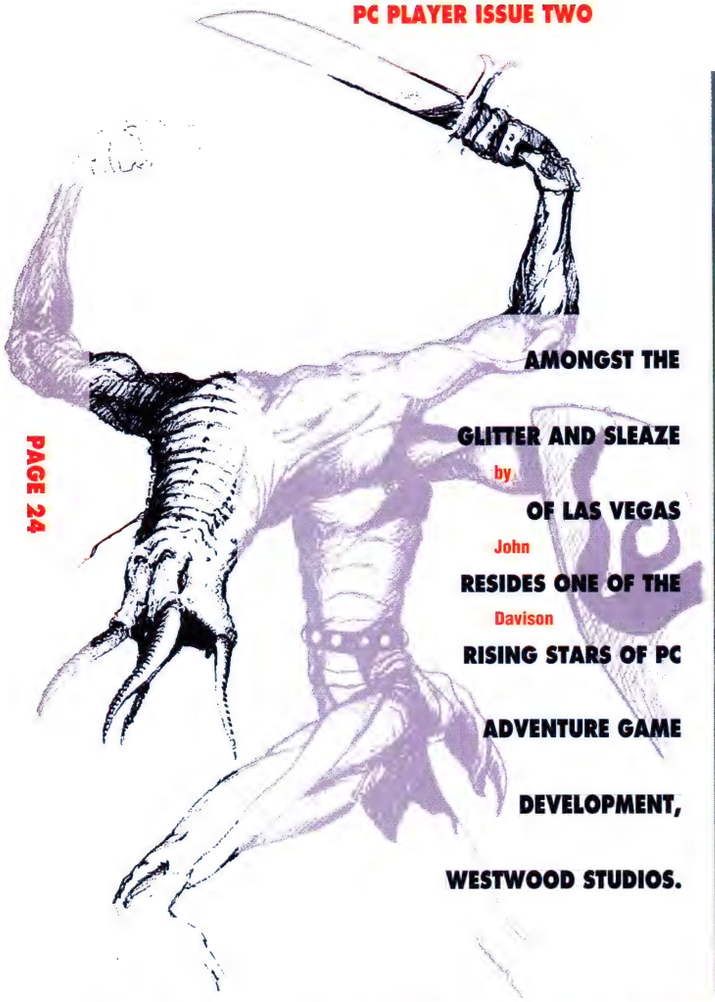


AMONGST THE GLITTER AND SLEAZE OF LAS VEGAS RESIDES ONE OF THE RISING STARS OF PC ADVENTURE GAME DEVELOPMENT, WESTWOOD STUDIOS.

by John Davison

WESTWOOD STUDIOS

STARTING life in 1985, Westwood Studios was the creation of Louis Castle and Brett Sperry. Initially known as Westwood Associates, the company made its name working on conversions for numerous computer formats including the Apple II, Commodore 64 and PC. The team became known very early on for being more than capable of working with particularly 'difficult' conversion work and soon became a highly respected company.

It wasn't long before conversion was not challenging enough though for the company, so hiring a team of artists and programmers, Sperry and Castle officially chartered Westwood Associates as an independent software developer.

Westwood worked with numerous other software houses in its formative years – Electronic Arts, Tengen, Epyx, SSI, Infocom, Accolade, Activision and Walt Disney Software have all taken advantage of the team's talents in the past. These ventures created numerous successes with games including such classics as Eye of the Beholder I and II, Dragon Strike, Warriors of the Eternal Sun and Battletech. In these early years Westwood was especially adept at transferring the games across a wide variety of formats (something vital for a team's success in such a volatile market) and gained quite a reputation for adapting to any new format which emerged.

In 1991 Westwood was looking to publish its own titles rather than use other firms, and after considerable time a relationship with Virgin Games was hatched, resulting in the formation of Westwood Studios.

The new company has since produced a number of titles, the first being Legend of Kyrandia which is a point-and-click adventure, that was followed by the highly successful Dune II in December '92, and the epic Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos in August of this year.

"INITIALLY KNOWN AS WESTWOOD ASSOCIATES, THE COMPANY MADE ITS NAME WORKING ON CONVERSIONS FOR NUMEROUS COMPUTER FORMATS INCLUDING THE APPLE II, COMMODORE 64 AND PC"

FEATURE

Rick 'Coco' Gush: producer

The company, now 60 strong in its staff compliment, is currently working on a variety of new projects, most of which are aimed at the PC and multi-media markets. Sequels to previous games are high on the priority list, with Kyrandia 2: The Hand of Fate set for imminent release (we'll be reviewing it in *PC Player* issue three) and Lands of Lore II currently in the very early conceptual stages. Aside from this the team is experimenting with a variety of new styles using the very latest technology. *PC Player* recently visited the Las Vegas-based offices to see what was going on and to talk to some of the people working on Westwood's forthcoming projects...

RICK 'COCO' GUSH: PRODUCER

"At the moment, all of the Westwood games have a very distinct style, there is a defined graphical 'look' to our products. Although we're very happy with this, there are a large number of artists on the staff who are now working on developing a new look. All kinds of new technology and images are explored to help expand the team's presentation of our products.

There are a number of projects underway – the Bad Boys project is an adventure which uses a very stylised cartoon look. We're looking into the possibility of experimenting with colour – at present only the major characters and objects on each screen are coloured and everything else is left black and white. It might look really shitty, but the good thing is that we have the ability to experiment.

Elsewhere we have guys developing the Dune II system. Command and Conquer is the next major 'mutation' of this system and we're working with all kinds of polygon manipulation and rendering techniques. The finished product is intended to be something truly different.

There are also guys working on 3D systems which move away from the tired computerised look. 3D Studio and Silicon Graphics systems are used to try and create something new and different. Most of the new projects are in the conceptual stage at present, and a whole load of ideas will be considered before we finally settle on something to finish as a product.

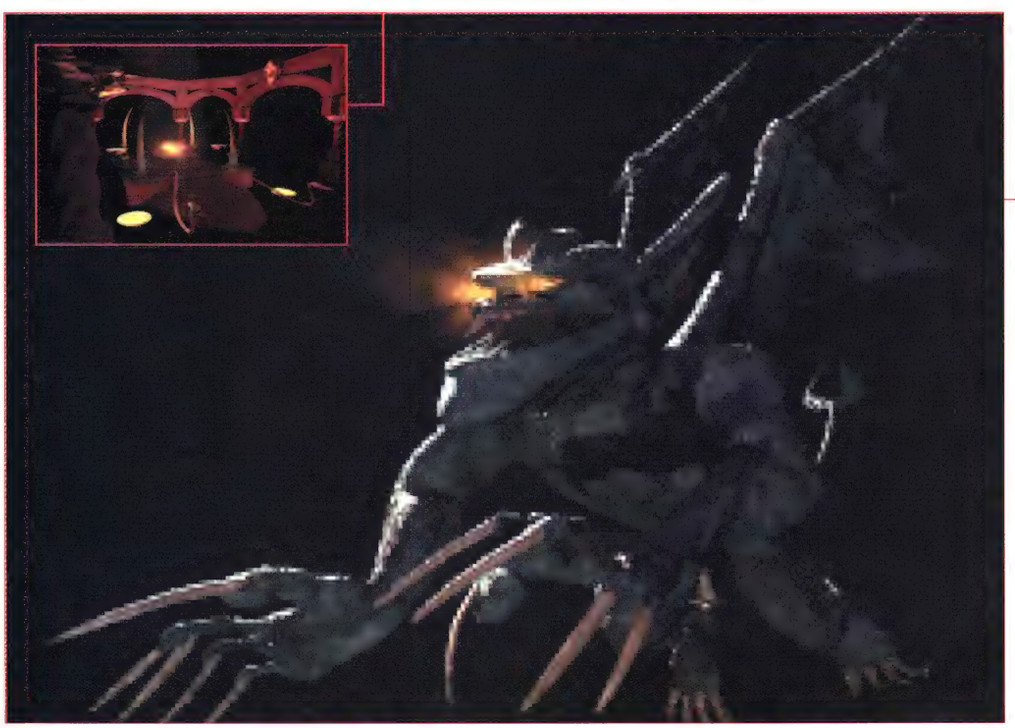
At the moment Hand of Fate is our biggest concern though. The game is very nearly finished and we're just tweaking various things before release. Most of our fan-mail actually concerns Kyrandia – people seemed to love the original, but to tell you the truth I thought it was a crappy game to start with and that's why the second game is so different. It's tempting not to try though – the artist in me wants to create something new and different, while the businessman says 'go for it, just do another one the same, it'll sell anyway'.

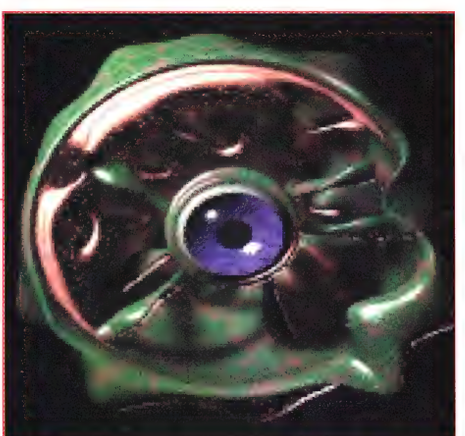
We don't really make a conscious effort to change things each time like Richard Garriot and his team over at Origin – we're really not that organised, things here are far too chaotic!

"AS A PRODUCER I HAVE A GREAT TIME WORKING ON THE PROJECTS. TAKE TOMORROW FOR EXAMPLE, I'M POPPING UP TO LA TO DIRECT PATRICK STEWART AS HE RECORDS THE VOICE-OVER FOR THE CD VERSION OF LANDS OF LORE"

As a producer I have a great time working on the projects. Take tomorrow for example, I'm popping up to LA to direct Patrick Stewart as he records the voice-over for the CD version of Lands of Lore. Hopefully I'll be looking after Angelica Houston when she records her part as well – as long as she decides to help us out that is. We're not really going to shout about who is voice acting for us yet, just in case people drop out. The end result should be really spectacular though – producing Lands of Lore CD has really been like producing a movie." ➤

THE FUTURE

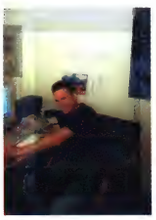




Rick Parks has been working on a number of rendered creations using the Silicon Graphics application Alias. These items are intended for use in the concept project Virtual Lands – something which could be a stand-alone product or part of the Lands of Lore series

FEATURE

New concepts were created for Hand of Fate, right down to a new method of propulsion for a ship – a huge galleon which is pulled along by a giant fish!



Rick Parks: senior artist

Elie Arabian: artist

➤ RICK PARKS: SENIOR ARTIST

"The conceptual stuff we're working on at the moment is something which is simply designed as a new game aimed at any high-spec format. It could be 3DO, PC CD-ROM or even Jaguar. The working title is Virtual Lands which could end up as one of two different things – either as a stand-alone product, or (more likely) as part of the Lands of Lore series.

Silicon Graphics development is something which we haven't really worked with before, and it's an absolute joy to work on. It's such an unbelievably powerful system. To tell the truth it has trouble working in the framework which we're proposing – telling it to animate at eight frames per second rather than video quality stuff really causes problems. It really is aimed at high-end usage, and the effects you can create are outstanding. I'm still only scratching the surface of what it's capable of, but it's the way ahead in 'world' design for games.

In the past I've been responsible for heading up a lot of the art in Westwood projects. I've worked on Hand of Fate and Lands of Lore – the intro in LoL was mine – and I'm responsible for everything from initial sketches to story-boarding and final art. Something like Lands of Lore is a massive project and throughout the game's development, we'd often have many artists working on different elements."

ELIE ARABIAN: ARTIST

"We're trying to take the artwork in the games one stage further these days. Rather than simply creating an individual monster or creature which only turns up once or twice, we're now developing species of creatures which all have subtle differences. For example within a basic species you can divide the characters up into different skill groups, much as we do with the player characters. It's worked for mainstream RPGs, so it's great fun building up a whole new race and more rounded characters. Our new creatures will be able to do far more moves, as well as have specialities depending on their abilities.

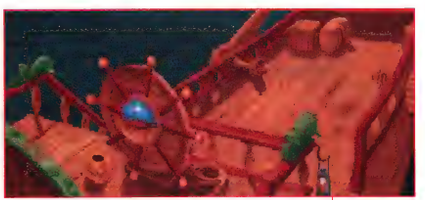
All of the artists here hope to be able to influence the style of the game and the story behind it by means of the work they produce. In all there are 17 artists working at Westwood, although the intention is that eventually there will be 25 of us. We'll often work on more than one project at once, although each game team has a core of artists they will often draw on any of the other guys to help out. We'll all do literally hundreds of sketches to create just a handful of scenes to begin with – early sketches take minutes to complete, but something more final will often take about three hours to do.

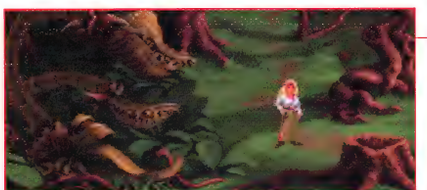
Aside from sketches, my speciality is animating. At the moment I use DPaint Animator to build up all of the frames, but I'm looking into using some other packages, including 3D Studio. My most recent animations have all been for Hand of Fate, virtually all of the monster anims were mine."

"SILICON GRAPHICS DEVELOPMENT IS SOMETHING WHICH WE HAVEN'T REALLY WORKED WITH BEFORE, AND IT'S AN ABSOLUTE JOY TO WORK ON. IT'S SUCH AN UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL SYSTEM"

The second game in the Kyrandia series has been worked on by a huge team. Although only a small core of people worked together, many artists were responsible for putting together some of the spectacular images

HAND OF FATE





FEATURE

HAND OF FATE TEAM...
Clockwise from top: Cindy Chinn (artist), Rick Gush (producer), Dwight Okahara (sound and music), Rick Parks (senior artist), Michael Legg (programmer)

LANDS OF LORE CD-ROM TEAM...
Clockwise from top: Frank Klepacki (music), Jenny Sward (producer), Phil Gorrow (designer), Rick Gush (writer and producer), Scott Bowen (programmer)

LANDS OF LORE TEAM...
Clockwise from top: Mark McCubbin (coder), Phil Gorrow (designer and coder), Bill Stokes (coder), Alan Crum (designer), Rick Parks (artist), Rick Gush (producer), Elie Arabian (artist)

SAM HASSAN: 3D SPECIALIST

"The 3D graphics in video games at the moment are far too shiny and perfect. What I'm trying to do is create things which are far more true to life. I take the artists' sketches and turn them into 3D Studio models – this in itself is difficult, 'cause often the artists will just go crazy and when it hits my desk I'll have to go over the work and adjust all of the aspect ratios and perspectives so that they're 'real'.

A sketch can look however you want it to, but a computer model has to have a front, sides and a back, so often a finished model will look a bit different from the initial concept.

Transferring sketches to screen is very hard work – you can't just scan the thing you see, because a scan would be a 2D image. Everything I do has to be a polygon-based model of the original – a model which is then bit-mapped and shaded to look like the sketch. Creating a 3D screen is just like construction, but you can only view it in 2D.

"I'LL GET INSPIRATION FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE, FROM FOOD PACKAGING TO SOMETHING I'VE SEEN ON AN ADVERT ON THE TV"

The next stage for me is to move over to Alias on the Silicon Graphics – the use of light and object manipulation is far more impressive on that. On the PC you can produce lighting effects a certain way, but with Alias it's like having real objects viewed by real cameras and lit using real lights. On 3D Studio if you want a shaft of light, you have to create polygon and shade it accordingly – with Alias you just tell the system where the light is coming from, what it's lighting and you can then add glow and mist to create your shaft of light. It's amazing. The power that Alias offers the artist is just phenomenal. For a project such as Lands of Lore II/Virtual Lands, we'll definitely use the Silicon Graphics technology very heavily."

Sam Hassan: 3D specialist

Frank Mendeola: artist

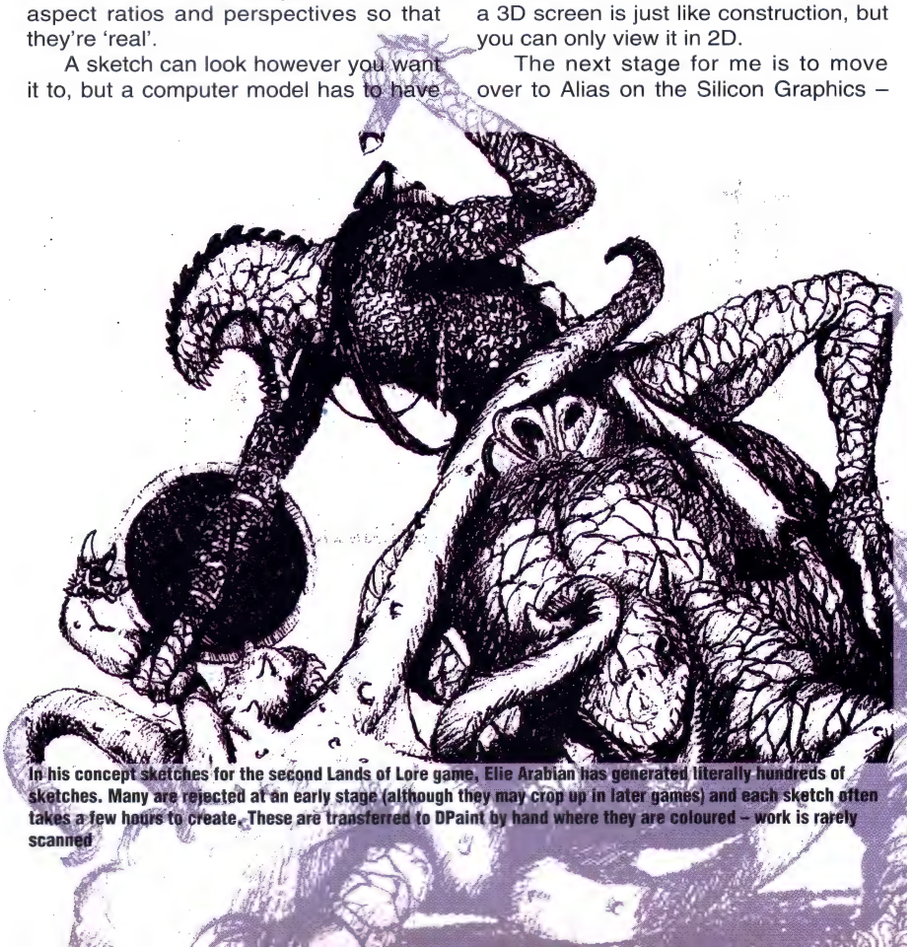
FRANK MENDEOLA: ARTIST

"I've not been here long, my previous job was working as a freelance illustrator but my primary role since I arrived has been to come up with some monster concepts for the forthcoming Lands of Lore game. By looking at previous efforts I've been able to come up with a whole host of new creatures.

I like to work by incorporating not only the look of something, but also the shape, texture, movement and environment of the creature. All this is important if a creation is to be believable and that's what I'm trying to achieve.

I'll get inspiration from all over the place, from food packaging to something I've seen on an advert on the TV. Everything can be used – if a shape takes your fancy you can work on that and see where it takes you.

I always work on tracing paper so that each sketch I create can be developed easily and quickly. I usually take about half an hour to produce a sketch so tracing bits of previous creations can speed me up a bit!" ■



In his concept sketches for the second Lands of Lore game, Elie Arabian has generated literally hundreds of sketches. Many are rejected at an early stage (although they may crop up in later games) and each sketch often takes a few hours to create. These are transferred to DPaint by hand where they are coloured – work is rarely scanned

FEATURE

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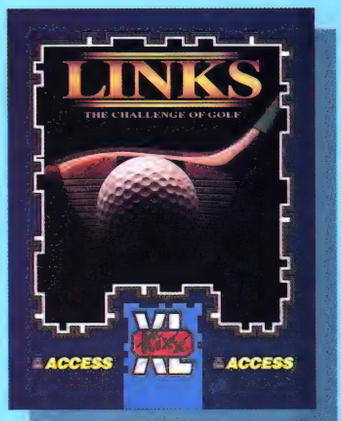

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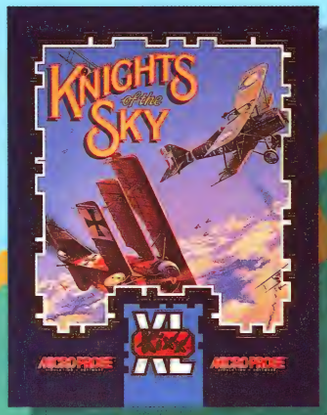

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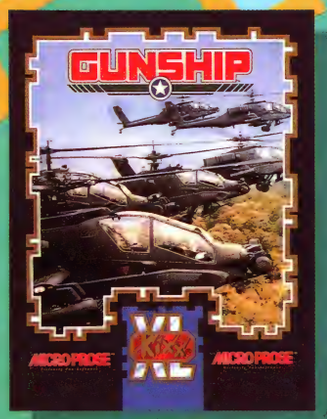

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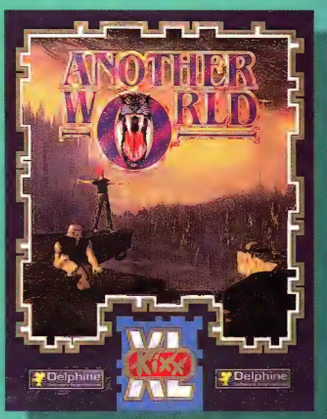

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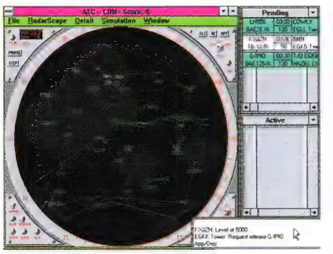

As if making sure that the planes land in one piece wasn't enough, variable weather and aircraft emergencies can be added to make things that little bit more challenging. Believe it or not, this is actually London Heathrow and the weather is making conditions very difficult indeed. It's going to be a long night

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

REVIEW

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SOFTWARE HOUSE
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£39.95

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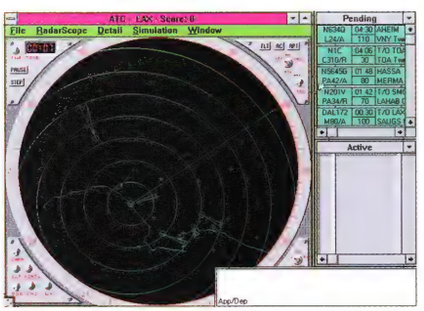
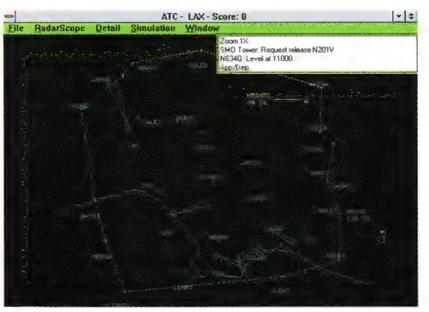
Dos 2 or higher with 512k Ram, Windows 3.0 or higher with 640k RAM, EGA

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards, Mouse

ANYONE who really takes their flight simulators seriously will no doubt have wondered, even if only in passing, what it must be like to be in control of the skies, literally, in the role of an air traffic controller (ATC). It seems like such a simple job – after all, us flight sim fans constantly take to the skies in aircraft ranging from World War I Sopwiths to state-of-the-art F-15s and F-16s, regularly taking on the bad guys with all manner of smart weapons and still manage to make it home in time for tea. Can controlling air traffic really be as complicated or as difficult?

"FOR ANYONE USED TO THE LATEST IN STATE-OF-THE-ART FLIGHT SIMULATOR GRAPHICS, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER IS GOING TO COME AS A BIG SHOCK"



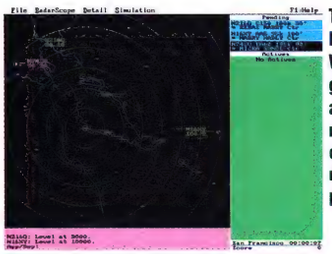


Before playing ATC, I would have seriously doubted that anything could be as difficult to master as the Tornado flight and weapons system, but after a while spent hunched over a radarscope with four planes coming in together to land at LA International airport, I was forced to change my mind.

For anyone used to the latest in state-of-the-art flight simulator graphics, ATC is going to come as a big shock. The game can be played in one of two versions – if you are a Windows user and have windows installed, ATC will run under that quite happily, or if you prefer to use the DOS environment, a DOS version is included in the package also. There are no real gameplay differences between the two versions, all the changes are control based and aesthetic due to the different operating systems. Another shock for the action junkies out there is the fact that there is only one screen. The radarscope (the large viewing area that approaching aircraft appear on) takes up the majority of the screen, with all the other simulation controls being accessed either by buttons around the scope, or by pull-down menus.

As the nature of the game suggests, it is your job to take command of every plane that comes into your airspace, and direct the planes in the safest way possible to their destination points, maintaining a separation between them of at least three miles horizontally or one thousand feet vertically. To do this requires you to make use of the various commands that an ATC has at his disposal. In the first instance, any plane outside your airspace must be cleared by you before any other actions can take place. Only after you have given it permission to enter the part of the sky that you are controlling will the real job begin.

Aircraft may be entering controlled airspace for any number of reasons. If it is a scheduled flight, then the plane may want directions to its destination airport. There are other times when a plane may only be passing through your airspace in order to get to another controlled zone, in which case all you have to do is make sure that it leaves at the same altitude as it came in at. The final problem involves aircraft that are taking off. You must give the tower clearance before any take-offs can commence, which can create problems if you have three aircraft coming in to land at an airport where four planes are waiting to take off from. Where do you put them all?!



The DOS version of the game looks a little different from its Windows counterpart, but the gameplay and control method are identical. In fact, the radarscope tends to look a little clearer in the DOS version making incoming aircraft and potential problems easier to spot

All this mayhem is controlled with the use of pull-down menus and commands issued to individual planes. If, for example, you were directing a 747 into LA International, the first thing to do would be to vector (manoeuvre) it into a position whereby it could start its approach. Altitude, speed and direction are all dictated by the ATC, with the object being to get the aircraft to wherever it's going without breaking the safety margin. When it's in position and on its final approach, you then have to hand-off to the tower (or, if the plane is flying through your airspace, the next control centre), who will then take control and let you get on with the job of managing the other 14 planes that appeared while you were admiring your handiwork.

At first glance, ATC looks to be a complicated game to learn, perhaps more so than a flight simulator, but it only appears that way. The manual is well written and the control method, especially when playing ATC under Windows, is excellent. The learning curve of the game is not steep and with all the variables set to perfect, the player can grasp things with amazing ease.

This simplicity belies a challenging game. With less than perfect pilots, thunder storms that force you to alter flight paths drastically and instrument failures all selectable under the options menu, not to mention the amount of planes in your sector at any one time and the chance to control the skies over a military airbase (including Miramar – the top gun school), ATC is a game that offers a challenge to players of every skill level. If you are a flight sim fan, then I urge you take a break from that Immelman and that Split S, and instead have a go at controlling the skies from the ground. It's not as easy as you may think.

"IF YOU ARE A FLIGHT SIM FAN, THEN I URGE YOU TAKE A BREAK FROM THAT IMMELMAN AND THAT SPLIT S, AND INSTEAD HAVE A GO AT CONTROLLING THE SKIES FROM THE GROUND"

SCORE ★★★★

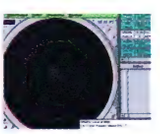
EXPERT OPINION

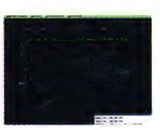
Russell Walker and Gary Naisbett-Jones who both work at CSE Aviation as air traffic controllers

"THE most remarkable thing about Air Traffic Controller is the way that the simulation is actually controlled. There are certain systems currently in use in the United States that make use of a trackball positioned beside the radarscope to control a small cursor on the screen, very much like the one depicted in this game. The controller simply clicks onto a plane and all the relevant flight information will appear. Functions can then be carried out using a QWERTY keyboard that has been especially adapted for this purpose.

I would have liked to see some sort of ranging system in use. It's all very well having 2x and 4x zoom, but without actual distances displayed it is all a bit meaningless. When an ATC is talking to an aircraft, an example of the type of commands issued would be; "NG176v, traffic at one o'clock at five miles". With this program, some of the authenticity has been lost due to there being no distances used.

"ALL IN ALL, I'D SAY THAT THIS PROGRAM COULD BE A VERY USEFUL TRAINING TOOL, AS IT IS NOT TO DISSIMILAR TO THE TRAINERS THAT WE BOTH LEARNED ON WHEN STUDYING AT COLLEGE"

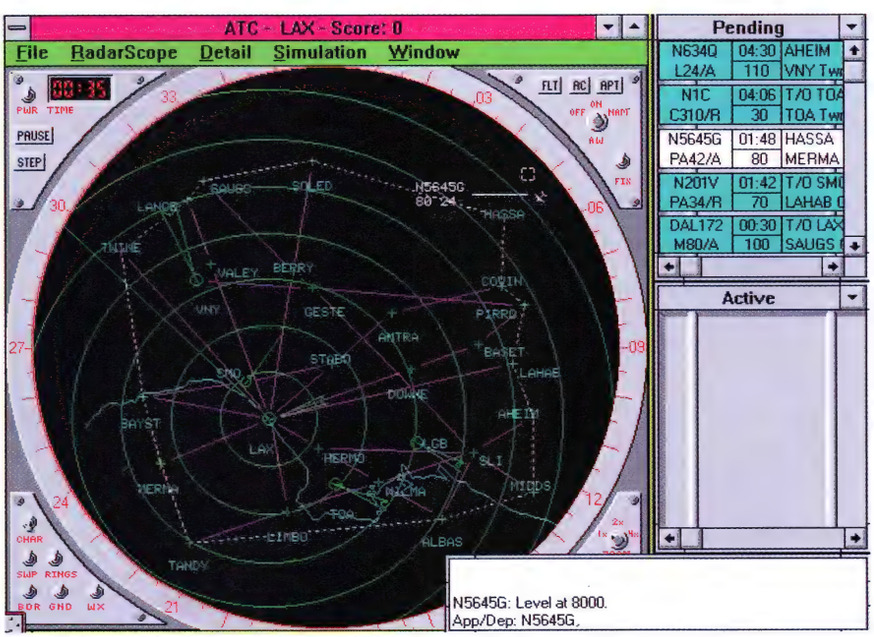




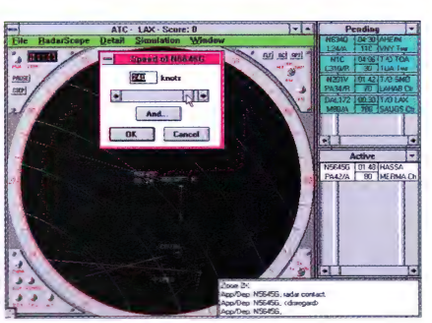
The actual display is very close to what a lot of air traffic controllers are using nowadays, especially over in the United States. The way that the planes blink on and off when the radar sweeps over them and updates their position is a very nice touch and totally authentic.

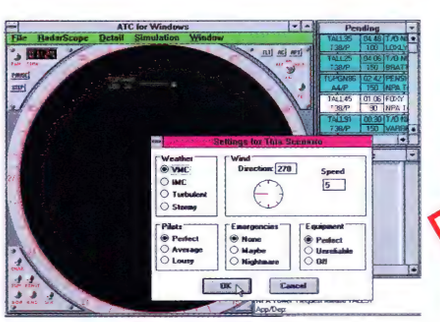
As far as everything else goes, that too seems to be very well done. The information tags that are attached to the planes mimic those that are found on a real radarscope, although there is a line missing that gives you information about its destination. You can even stretch and rotate the tags about the screen, which is something that is found on some of the more modern radarscopes.

All in all, I'd say that this program could be a very useful training tool, as it is not to dissimilar to the trainers that we both learned on when studying at college." ■



(Above) The visible purple lines are the accepted flight routes between fixes (radio beacons). Often referred to as 'air corridors', these can be used to navigate the plane through any tricky situations that arise, such as avoiding other aircraft or lining up for an approach





(Right) Like most of the control features in ATC, altering a plane's speed is very easy. Simply click onto the desired aircraft on the radarscope, where a sub menu will pop up. Select the command that you wish to issue and alter the details accordingly. It's a very easy system to use, but it gives a lot of flexibility to the budding controller

KINGMAKER

PRODUCT
Kingmaker

SOFTWARE HOUSE
US Gold

PRICE
£37.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 640K Ram, 286, VGA, 8 Mb Hard Drive, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland sound cards

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED IN A STRATEGY GAME, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK FOR...

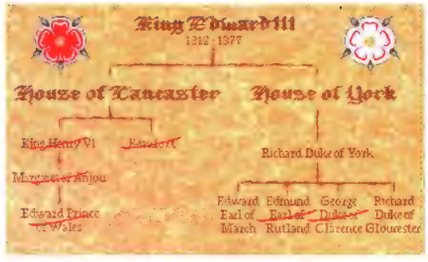
By Paul Mallinson

REVIEW

KINGMAKER

is a strategy board game that has been on sale since 1974 – almost a good 20 years in total. Although a few of the PC Player staff (myself included) have been completely oblivious to this fact, the game has sold millions of copies. Whereas most board games only sell well for a couple of years before gradually dying away, Kingmaker has sold consistently well since its initial release. Therefore, it does not seem strange that someone would eventually pick up the licence for the board game, if only to appease the thousands of existing Kingmaker players that are already out there. US Gold now throws down the gauntlet to all prospective would-be kings...

(Below) If your name is crossed out on the family tree, you're dead. Not a happy time for the royal family at the moment, is it?



(Below) When you begin to get the hang of the game, you can then spend more time issuing orders to your troops in advanced combat mode. Select WHICH of your men you are issuing orders to, decide exactly WHAT they are going to attack and finally, HOW they are going to attack. You can instruct your men to concentrate their attack onto one particular person (for example, an important nobleman) or a particular group of men. Here, I'm instructing my flanking archers to concentrate their fire on the group of soldiers protecting the noble at the rear. If they do a good enough job, it should be no problem to rush in and finish him off!

Starting the game allows the selection of a number of crucial options. Choosing the number of factions you will face in the game will raise or lower the difficulty levels – competing against one faction remains the easiest and quickest introduction to the game, whereas taking on five other factions at the same time introduces an element of panic into the game! The more factions you choose to drag into the war, the longer the game becomes, with the average playing time between two factions being approximately two hours, but call in the other five and you're looking at a mammoth 10-hour session. The save game option makes life a lot easier during these longer campaigns.

Further options allow you to set the game up exactly how you require. If you choose to allocate your forces before the computer opponent does (or 'blind' as the game refers to it), you get the chance to move your pieces first. This tends to make things rather more difficult for you, but on the other hand it does add spice to the game. Advanced options such as plague and weather cast an extra element of unpredictability over the proceedings – storms delay major battles and plagues will wipe out any armies unfortunate enough to be caught in the same location as the disease.

The overall objective of Kingmaker is to control the last royal heir in the game and to crown him King of England. In other words, you're not actually trying to become King yourself, but to be the power behind the throne. To achieve this you must first capture a royal heir, which is done by storming a royal castle and taking the heir hostage.

"ONCE YOU HAVE CAPTURED YOUR HEIR YOU MUST THEN ELIMINATE HIS OR HER RIVALS. TRUE, IT'S A MESSY BUSINESS, BUT AT LEAST IT KEEPS THE AXE-SHARPENERS BUSY"

If your army is greater in number than the defending forces you will (more often than not) take control of the place. Clicking on any army or castle icon will display exactly how big or well-defended it is, which comes in extremely useful before diving straight into battle.

Once you have captured your heir you must then eliminate his or her rivals. True, it's a messy business, but at least it keeps the axe-sharpeners busy. When all of your rivals are dead you must then head for the nearest cathedral town or city to enable your chap to be crowned by either an Archbishop or two Bishops.

Achieving this all-powerful position may sound easy on paper, but complex winning strategies must be concocted using skill and pure cunning in order to successfully attain the crown. The game's immediacy, thanks to the auto-help system, is one of its best assets and within no time at all you should have discovered a few successful ruses of your own.

The colour of the displayed flag indicates friend or foe
Ripe for the beheading!
Click here to open up an easy-to-view map of the whole kingdom
This is the scaled-down version of the main play area. Click anywhere for a quick look at a chosen area of the map
New assets become available to you during the game – allocate them to your men with this icon
At the moment it's in movement mode. Clicking elsewhere will move your piece to the chosen area
The number on the bottom-left of the icon indicates how many moves you have remaining
No ships are docked here at the moment
But then you knew that already
Royal Heir
Loyal Town
Cursor
Current Controlled Unit
Naval Port
Save Game
Over-view Map
Kingdom Map
Distribute Assets
Icon Name
Version Number
Check out the royal family tree to see which royal heirs are dead and which are still alive
If another nobleman pledges his allegiance to your crusade, bring him into the game from here
Alliance
These three icons allow the player to find specific points or pieces on the map or look up information on a place or character
Information
What strategy game would be complete without a 'version' window?

REVIEW

More soldiers rally to your cause throughout the duration of the game. If any of your noblemen are running short of a few soldiers, allocate a few more battalions to their ranks

Both sides are after the last surviving royal, Richard of York. Whoever reaches him first and makes it to the nearest cathedral will probably win the game

Arguing in front of the king is going to get you nowhere. Simply slay the king and jump in with your own pretender to the crown

Before you click on the attack button, check through your orders and make sure everyone's going to do what they're supposed to do

➤ Kingmaker is a superb introduction to the genre for strategy beginners. The auto-help facility is an extremely useful feature, allowing almost instant access to the game without first referring to a lengthy manual. However, the manual should certainly be read, especially in order to discover many of Kingmaker's subtleties – the auto-help facility shouldn't be used just as a lazy alternative!

Unlike many strategy games which have a tendency to become increasingly complex as you progress, Kingmaker begins simple and stays simple for the duration of the game. It sure LOOKS complicated upon first inspection, but looks can be deceiving. After your forces are allocated throughout the kingdom, strategic movement becomes the most important aspect of the game – clicking from county to county, chasing those elusive nobles and slaughtering the opposition becomes speedy work.

The clear and attractive presentation helps no end. The character counters are well defined and move smoothly over the digitised map of England. Because only a small proportion of the map is visible at any one time, it does become necessary to scroll around the immediate area to check out the opposition and suchlike. Unfortunately, this is done by clicking on a smaller scale map of England with the display updating to the chosen area, which I found to be rather fiddly, much preferring to use the cursors to scroll my way around. This is a minor niggle though, due more to my own laziness rather than a serious design fault on behalf of the programmers.

Digitised speech bursts forth from the speakers every now and then, often sounding like a cross between Harry Secombe and Peter Duncan in his panto days. The speech is clear and plentiful (the Shakespeare-esque introduction is DIFFERENT at least) and the music atmospheric. At times I could almost smell the death, decay and hessian sack clothing of that particular period!

"IT PLAYS SPLENDIDLY, LOOKS GREAT, BUT MOST OF ALL IT OFFERS A LONG-TERM CHALLENGE AND REPRESENTS GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY"

Kingmaker is a satisfyingly violent game too. Now I don't mean satisfying in any sadistic kind of way, because the violence in Kingmaker is all implied not explicit, however it sure feels good to execute the opposition after a particularly drawn-out and bloody battle – who needs ransoms? Anti-royalists will love the heir-bashing nature of the gameplay and any strategist worth his/her salt should be given a run for their money by the computer opponents.

Kingmaker is an important strategy release for the PC. It plays splendidly, looks great, but most of all it offers a long-term challenge and represents good value for money. Kingmaker is a perfect ambassador for the whole strategy genre. **SCORE ★★★★**

AN EXPERT'S OPINION

REVIEW

"IF ever there was a game designed to introduce those of you wanting to try war-gaming but are unsure of where to start, then this is it. Many of you may have been put off by the complexity of many computer war games currently on the market, but Kingmaker is perfect for the beginner, despite choosing one of the most complex and bloody periods of English history for its theme.

"IT'S NOT THE BATTLING THAT MAKES KINGMAKER A WINNER FOR ME, IT'S THE PLOTTING, PLANNING AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WONDERFULLY DEVIOUS!"

The game is very easy to get to grips with, has a fairly simple operating system and is faithful to the popular board game of the same name (which itself has introduced many a player to the subtle art of war-gaming). The flexible game system allows you to customise the way you play (and learn), and goes as far as providing a beginner-friendly auto-help option which provides hints and tips as you go.

You can play with the computer making moves ahead of you, but once you've tried the game a couple of times, the best way to try for the crown is to play 'blind' and experience your opponent's unexpected strategies, testing your own political skills to the full.

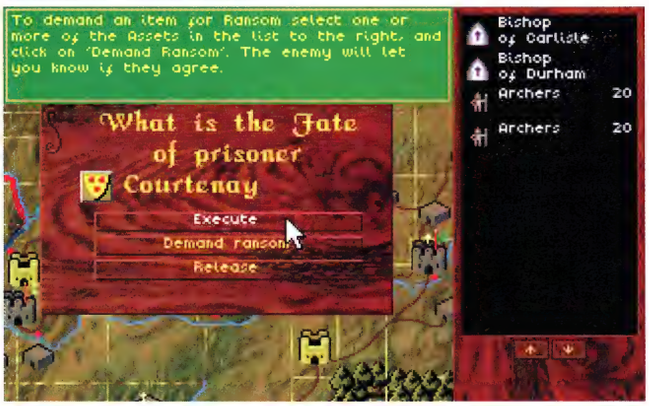
Kingmaker is similar to the classic board game Risk in many ways, mainly because you've got to wipe everyone out to win! However, it's not the battling that makes Kingmaker a winner for me, it's the plotting, planning and the opportunity to be wonderfully devious! It may even make you want to try 'live' war-gaming over the table with a couple of mates and a bunch of lead figures! This leads me on to the one criticism that it's really possible to make – the fact that you can't take on a human opponent. Kingmaker would make a great multi-player game, but for now, the computer seems smart enough to create more than enough mayhem for me to cope with.

A run-down of the events and personalities involved in the Wars of the Roses also comes as part of the package, so you can bone up on a bit of history too. Overall, an absorbing and entertaining intro to the genre." ■

Tim Metcalfe has been a journalist for many years, previously having been the editor of C&VG and the role-playing magazine, Gamesmaster

The turn of a card can swing the game either way. You could be on the verge of a crucial victory when all of a sudden you are summoned away from the area! Your hired soldiers could down weapons and walk off if they feel like it – it's these unpredictable elements of the game that make Kingmaker so riveting

(Below) Courtenay is defeated in battle and quickly apprehended. If the prisoner is an important member of the opposition then a generous ransom may be in order, otherwise it's "Off with his head!"


To demand an item for Ransom select one or more of the Assets in the list to the right, and click on 'Demand Ransom'. The enemy will let you know if they agree.
What is the Fate of prisoner Courtenay
Execute
Demand ransom
Release
Bishop of Carlisle
Bishop of Durham
Archers 20
Archers 20

(Below) If you're caught out at sea and a storm brews up, your ship will be forced to take refuge at the nearest available port. Storms can sometimes sink your ships, so bear this in mind if you're transporting a large number of men on one ship

THE MAKING OF KINGMAKER

Graham Lilley (Heroes of the Lance, Shadow Sorcerer) has spent most of the past 18 months locked in a small room with his right-hand graphics maestro, Kevin Bulmer (Corporation and Legends of Valour), and his game development posse, Bob Malin, Steve Fitton and Paul Cockburn. However, we successfully managed to drag Graham away from his War of the Roses textbooks to ask him a few questions:

Q What is it that makes the Kingmaker board game so special?

A *You can never predict what's going to happen each time you play it. Even though you might appear to have been given a bad deal, by the time you've assessed your strengths and weaknesses you just have to play them for what they are, so it's good in that sense.*

Q So you are a fan of the board game?

A *Yeah, I am. I had played the board game of Kingmaker a long time before the licence came along.*

Q Was there much historical research involved or was it pretty much all sorted out for you by the board game manufacturers?

A *The board game contained most of the research material, but I did do some research into finding out what things looked like at the time. I've got books on the War of the Roses now, which I didn't have before working on this project, so I did follow it up with my own research.*

Q What benefits does the computer version of Kingmaker have over the board game?

A *The advantages are more in terms of performance. The computer will respond a lot quicker than the average human player sitting around the table. Also, you may have a problem finding a large number of people that have actually played and know the board game – the computer is there to fill those gaps.*

Q Can you tell me anything about Kingmaker's much-publicised artificial intelligence routines?

A *We put these powerful AI routines into the program and tested them to death. As our games testing people played it, they pointed out any discrepancies or things they didn't like, and we modified them to handle any particular situation that may have arisen during play.*

Q Did you ever consider a link-up version of Kingmaker, so that human players could play against each other?

A *That's something we're looking into more or less as we speak. It was left out of the original game design, but by the time we thought it could become a viable option it was too late, because we had committed to a launch date. A link-up version could possibly appear in a subsequent release if it was found that there was sufficient demand for it – if enough people ask US Gold for it, it will probably happen.*

Q Did you encounter any development problems along the way?

A *One of the main problems was that we were critically short of memory and there were a few features on the development list that had to be left out. We would have liked to include a feature where characters could defect or change sides during a campaign, or another where you could plunder and take over enemy ships, but unfortunately these had to be left out to make way for the more important game features.*

Q Are there any hidden elements of Kingmaker that you would like to impress upon PC Player readers?

A *There are a few features that are masked from the player. For example, each player has a number of specific character attributes (such as aggression, etc) which were included to incorporate some unpredictability into the game. How to treat the opposition will depend on how they treat you – they do keep record if you've been nasty to them and will attempt to get their own back later in the game, or probably decide not to cooperate in ransoms. A lot of these features are masked because there are so many numbers being flung around inside the program, that we didn't want to shock a novice by bombarding them with all these stats and variables.*

Graham Lilley – Kingmaker programmer

REVIEW

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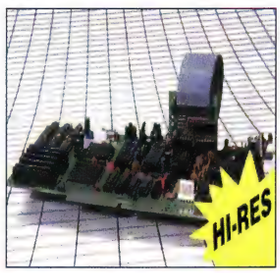

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The forest stages are by far the nicest to look at, with at least an acceptable amount of trackside detail. It's just a pity that no one thought to put some kind of graphical touch on the horizon to make the game complete

AFTER FLYING AND FIGHTING IN AN F-16 OR A TORNADO, WHERE DOES THE NEXT DOSE OF ADRENALINE COME FROM? THE ANSWER COULD LIE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORTS CAR RALLYING.

PAGE 38

RALLY

PRODUCT
Rally

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Europress Software

PRICE
£34.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 640k Ram, 16Mhz 386, VGA

SUPPORTS
Mouse, Joystick,
Soundblaster, AdLib, Roland Sound Cards

THE RAC Rally has, over the years, provided fans of rally car racing with some spectacular action. Drivers have to undertake the 344 mile journey in all weather, across a multitude of different race environments. The race is actually a round for the FIA World Rally Championships for both manufacturers and drivers, and as such carries a lot of prestige, not to mention prize money

Rally attempts to simulate what it must be like to compete in this prestigious event – hurtling round a forest track at over 100mph, with only four lumps of rubber and a roll cage separating you from forming a close and personal relationship with the local deciduous tree population.

The first thing to do before entering the rally proper is to get the feel of the car. This can be accomplished with the use of the practice option which, as the name suggests, allows you to try your hand at driving without actually having your results recorded in the official rally times.

As the RAC rally takes place at all hours, over a wide variety of different stages and in all weather, just practising in perfect sunlight on a racetrack would not be very helpful. Therefore you can drive in conditions that will crop up in the actual race, such as darkness, snow and rain. The type of car to be practised in can also be decided, thus allowing you to gauge the best machine for the job (see 'I Wanted it in Red' panel).

The final thing to be decided before the green flag drops is what type of tyres are going to be used for the race. You'll receive data on the length of the impending course, what type of weather you'll encounter and what road surface will be raced upon. Don't ignore this – if it's raining and the surface is very muddy, choose the correct tyres or say hello to the tree at the first right-hander.

When you're happy with what you've achieved, it's a case of getting your timecard stamped and entering the race. An unusual feature here is the option to have up to six human players all competing in the event, something that is guaranteed to increase the competitive angle of the game no end.

"DRIVERS HAVE TO UNDERTAKE THE 344 MILE JOURNEY IN ALL WEATHER, ACROSS A MULTITUDE OF DIFFERENT RACE ENVIRONMENTS"

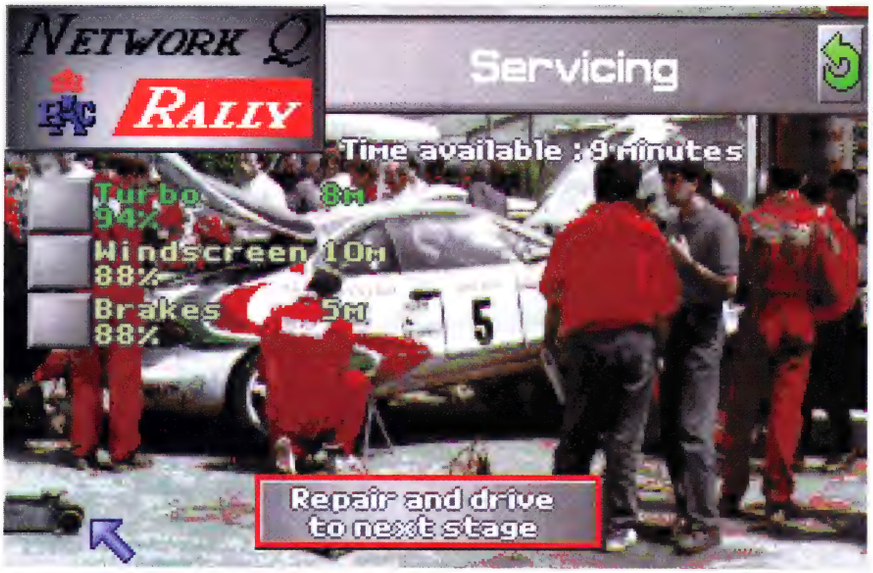
There will be times during the race when you either come off the track or take a corner too fast and flip over. The most common problem during time trials are cracks appearing in the windshield. Although not serious straight away, if they are left for too long the windscreen will give, and the race will be over

OK, so the flag drops and away you go. Like Micropose's Formula One, there are numerous help functions that take some of the pressure off the driver and make the game easier to play. Auto gear shifting, indestructibility and auto-braking all make things a hell of a lot more simple, but tend to detract from the feeling of total control. If the time hasn't been put in on the practice track, then the help features aren't going to make that much difference anyway.

The actual race is viewed from the cockpit of the car, with all the necessary dials and gauges displayed on the dash. In actual fact, there isn't a great deal of information to look at – apart from the moving map display, everything else is hidden, with a crude sort of HUD showing the speedometer and rev counter available should you need it.

With all the auto controls on, it's simply a matter of keeping the throttle open all the way around the course,

REVIEW



After each leg of the race, this screen pops up to inform you of any repairs that need to be made to the car. Everything is colour coded – any problem highlighted in green is minor, yellow means a repair is needed very soon and red indicates that the damaged part will need replacing immediately

while negotiating the left and right turns. Veering off the course results in the car slowing down, but strangely, not being crushed to a pulp. I'd have thought that hitting a static object at over 100mph would result in a little more than just a dented bumper and a slight headache, but hey, what do I know!

As the stages that are to be raced are all time trials, the only thing that needs to be beaten is the clock. This is the first major problem with the game because racing sims are only exciting when you have something tangible to race against. Look at Formula One or even Indianapolis 500, the thing that makes the racing so much fun in these games is the fact that you can see an opponent up ahead, and the only thing that you're concentrating on is getting past them whatever the cost. There is none of this in Rally.

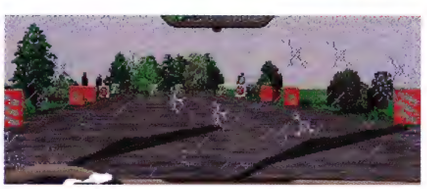
The graphics are also something that let the game down. Although the in-car graphics are passable (after all, there is only a steering wheel, some hands and a moving map to display), the outside representations are far too jerky in the way that they are animated to give a smooth feeling of high speed driving. Trees, spectators and other outside objects have all been bit-mapped when it would have looked a lot better, and moved a lot smoother, to have them portrayed in simple polygons.

The one thing about Rally which should be applauded is the co-driver option. In a race, it is as important to know what lies ahead of you as it is to drive well, and the co-driver supplies this information either in text form or, if you have a sound card, in speech. It's actually quite exciting to hurtle down a long straight and have your partner suddenly tell you that a "left 7" is the next thing that you have to watch out for.

"IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE EXCITING TO HURTLE DOWN A LONG STRAIGHT AND HAVE YOUR PARTNER SUDDENLY TELL YOU THAT A "LEFT 7" IS THE NEXT THING THAT YOU HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR"

Overall, Rally is not a bad game in its own right. The graphics are a little rough, but it is playable. The problem is that there is not enough variety to the game, and when it is placed up against the likes of Formula One and Indycar, it falls by the wayside rather badly.

SCORE ★★

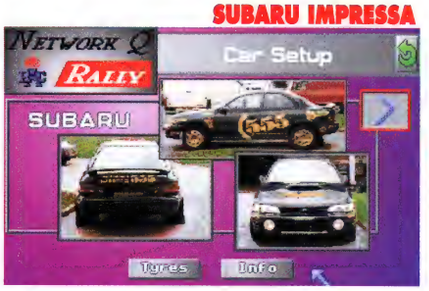


The RAC Rally is just a small part of a worldwide event that goes together to make up the FIA Drivers' Championship, combining stages in Australia, Europe and South America

The start of the race is indicated by some strange, free-floating fingers counting you down from three to one. You actually get the race counted down verbally as well, although the official sounds 'bunged-up'

BUT I WANTED IT IN RED

SUBARU IMPRESSA



Engine: 2000cc, 4 cam, turbo 16 valve
Gearbox: 6 speed manual
Team: 555 Subaru World Rally Team

TOYOTA CELICA 4WD

Engine: 1988cc, 4 cylinder, turbo 16 valve DOHC
Gearbox: 6 speed manual
Team: Toyota Castrol Team

FORD ESCORT RS COSWORTH

Engine: 2000cc, 4 cylinder, turbo 16 valve
Gearbox: 7 speed manual
Team: Ford Motorsport

LANCIA HF INTEGRALE

Engine: 2000cc, 4 cylinder, turbo 16 valve
Gearbox: 6 speed manual
Team: Lancia Martini Racing

MITSUBISHI EVOLUTION

Engine: 2000cc, 4 cylinder, 16 valve
Gearbox: 6 speed manual
Team: Ralliart Europe

REVIEW

Home - 45 Holland, Notting Hill
Annisette - 16 Hampden Hill, Notting Hill
Hades Club - 21 Scarsdale Villa, Kensington
Holmwood - 19 St. Augustines, Westminster
Newsstand - 98 Rutherford, Westminster
More...

If you come across a new address, it will instantly be added to your journal. You will now be able to travel to this place by carriage

INTERACTIVE movies have, to date, disappointed players due to their lack of gameplay, depth and level of interactivity. Does the fact that a game is based around CD technology and has huge chunks of Full Motion Video (FMV) mean that it is qualified to be called a fully interactive movie?

Dracula Unleashed allows you to take the role of Alexander Morris, a young gentleman arriving in London to investigate the sudden death of his brother. As Alexander, you only have a limited amount of time to identify the cause behind your brother Quincey's death, and to determine the nature of the strange events that are taking place. It shouldn't take a great deal of investigative deduction to discover that blood-sucking vampires are the root of your problems, just try reading the title on the box for starters!

Time is the most valuable commodity in this game. You must travel (by carriage) through the streets of London gathering information as you progress. Most conversation is represented by a piece of FMV inside a window on the screen, with VCR-like controls at the base of the display enabling the player to review the video sections at their leisure. These conversations may throw up vital clues to help you on your way – a useful item, a local address or a piece of information leading onto something bigger. These little nuggets of info can all be stored in your journal (accessed from the main set of icons at the bottom of the screen) and examined at a later date. Newspaper cuttings, conversations and even your own thoughts can be included for storage, with an option to review them either as text or as digitised speech.

As you gather information, you should be able to solve a few puzzles by arriving at the right location with the right item at the right time. If that sounds confusing, it was meant to! The concept of a 'puzzle' in Dracula is used as loosely as possible. For example, you go to visit the Van Helsing family

"THE QUALITY OF SPEECH, MUSIC AND VIDEO IS ASTOUNDING. IN SUPER VGA, THE INTRICATELY DRAWN BACKGROUNDS REALLY SET UP A CREEPY VICTORIAN ATMOSPHERE"

YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE IS UNLEASHED ONTO THE DARK STREETS OF OLD LONDON TOWN...

PRODUCT
Dracula Unleashed

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Viacom/Mindscape

PRICE
£49.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 4Mb Ram, 20Mhz 386sx, SVGA or VGA, Mouse, CD-ROM Drive (150k ps transfer rate)

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib Gold, Microsoft Sound System, Pro Audio Spectrum Sound Cards

DRACULA UNLEASHED

REVIEW

The adventure starts on December 31st, 1899. Poor Quincey Morris never lived long enough to see the turn of the century

It seems that Purfleet Asylum is having a few problems keeping its loony inmates under any sort of control

Inside the Saucy Jack Club you can catch up on the latest gossip. It's amazing some of the things you can pick up there

There are 18 slots available for 18 items. Use them well

The professor will describe and explain any icons that you're not too sure about

Time is of the essence, so keep one eye on your pocket watch at all times

Keep track of all gathered information by storing it in your journal

If you need to save the game or toggle a few options, then click here

Carriage is the modern way of travel. Its speed makes light work of the busy London streets

Click here to bring up a map of London

Alexander, like most human beings, needs to rest every night in his bed

On the streets is where the action is, so stop looking at these icons and get out there!

and learn that the lady of the house has a penchant for red roses. You get the red rose (I forget from where...) and return to the Van Helsing house – problem solved. Mrs Van Helsing reacts differently when you turn up with the rose and you are treated to a new piece of FMV, complete with new clues.

Whilst the quality of the FMV is exemplary and cannot be faulted, the content certainly CAN be criticised on many points. Firstly (and most embarrassingly), the English accents perpetrated by these so-called video actors are nothing short of diabolical. This would not be too bad, if only the acting, sets, lighting and camera work compensated for this deficiency, but they don't. The video segments of Dracula Unleashed appear to be the computer equivalent of a Glen A Larson (he of Knight Rider and Hart to Hart fame) TV programme – ie dull, boring, lowest common denominator.

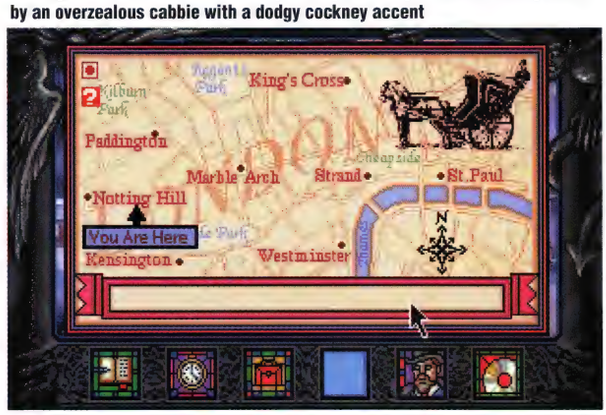
The quality of speech, music and video is astounding. In Super VGA, the intricately drawn backgrounds really set up a creepy Victorian atmosphere and the icons are also all extremely well designed (resembling stained glass windows). Best of all is the introduction music – an orchestral arrangement of 'Carmina Burana' (for the musically uninitiated of you out there, it's the classical piece used on the Old Spice adverts) over the opening titles. The effect really is stunning and draws you into the game as a film would.

Unfortunately, the interactive element of Dracula is lacking. I didn't find wandering around the same streets in London again and again particularly enthralling, but if you're a bit of a 'street' buff then this could be right down your alley. Me? Unlike the vampires so scarcely seen in this CD-ROM product, I would very much prefer a little more to sink my teeth into. **SCORE ★★**

"UNLIKE THE VAMPIRES SO SCARCELY SEEN IN THIS CD-ROM PRODUCT, I WOULD VERY MUCH PREFER A LITTLE MORE TO SINK MY TEETH INTO"

Unfortunately, Dracula Unleashed is far from interactive – gameplay merely allows the player to move from location to location so that they can watch one FMV sequence after another

Moving about London is achieved by hailing a carriage. You are then greeted by an overzealous cabbie with a dodgy cockney accent



Full Motion Video (FMV) sequences detail your every move. Here we see one of Alexander's disturbing dreams acted out

Annelise, Alexander's girlfriend, is wandering through the misty streets of London

You call to Annelise and she turns to face you, blood pouring from her gaping mouth

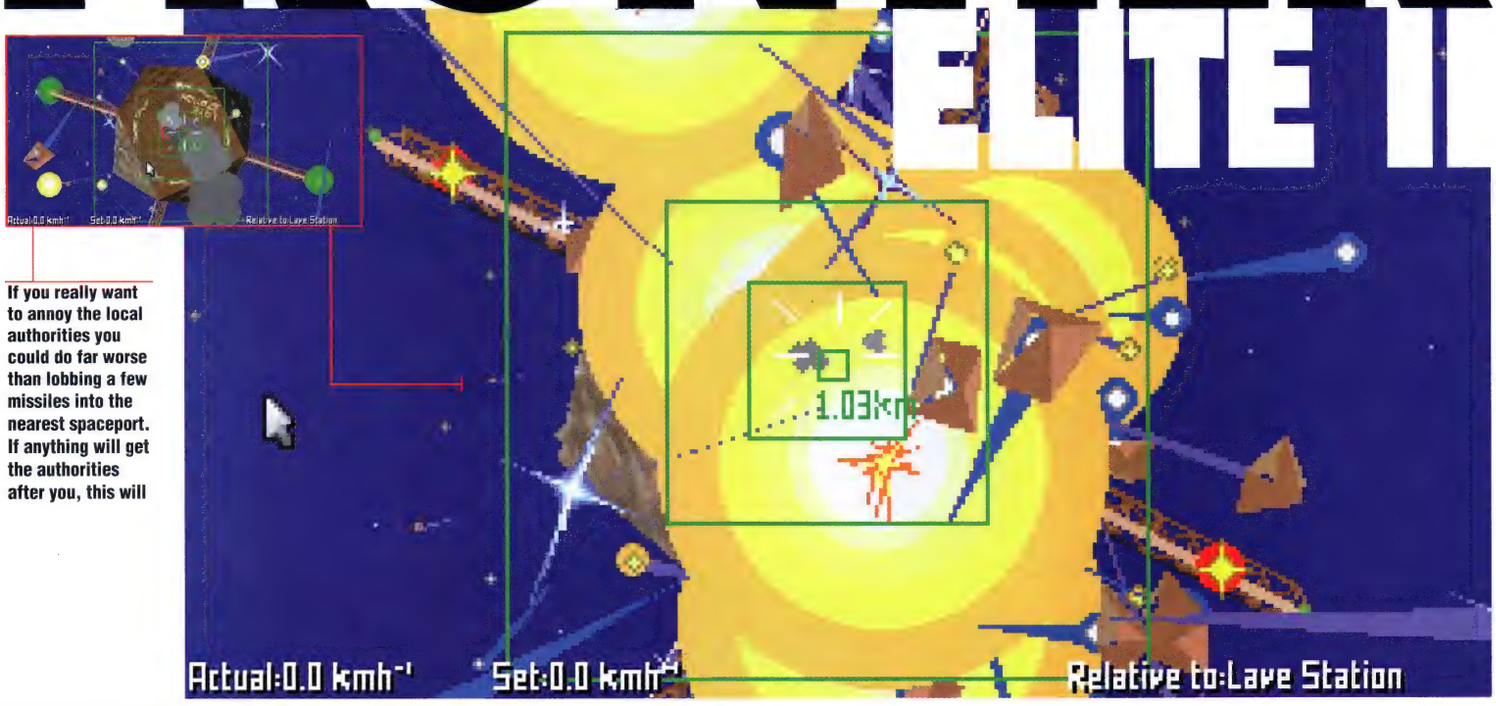
Suddenly she metamorphasises into a wolf (it's all done with mirrors) and you wake with a jolt

It's handy that you kept the journal where you write your thoughts, down by the side of your bed

REVIEW

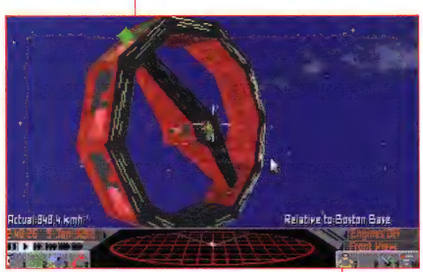
PAGE 42

FRONTIER ELITE II



If you really want to annoy the local authorities you could do far worse than lobbing a few missiles into the nearest spaceport. If anything will get the authorities after you, this will

All of the stations are detailed right down to ID markings, landing lights and beacons. From a distance they can be seen to be rotating while up close you'll often match the rotation thanks to the wonders of modern autopilots



REVIEW

THE MOST EAGERLY AWAITED SEQUEL OF ALL TIME? ELITE II FINALLY ARRIVES, BUT HAS IT BEEN WORTH THE FIVE YEAR WAIT?

PRODUCT
Frontier: Elite II

SOFTWARE HOUSE
GameTek

PRICE
£39.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb Ram, 386, VGA

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland Sound Cards, Joystick

THE original Elite is one of the few games that really shook the computer games industry – its 3D polygons with advanced hidden-line-removal techniques showed what could really be done with a 32K BBC Micro Model B. Since the game's conversion to various other formats (including the PC) it has now sold in excess of 750,000 copies. A sequel was inevitable, and news of its development has been knocking around for absolutely ages – even screen shots did the rounds about a year ago. But five years in development? Is any game really worthy of this sort of attention?

There are going to be an awful lot of people out there who would probably buy the game purely based on the pedigree. If it wasn't for the original however, would people still love it? The answer to this is almost certainly...yes.

The ethos behind the game is that it is both open-ended and infinite. There are no set missions and no ultimate goal. The game simply presents a multitude of opportunities that vary from the mundane to the exciting. As with the original game, much of the gameplay

can centre on simple trading or combat-related objectives. However, there are far more opportunities here to ensure that your life as a starship pilot is as fruitful as possible.

The game begins in the year 3200 and your grandfather, Commander Peter Jameson, has been killed in the outer regions of the Reidquat system. In his will he has left you and all his other grandchildren an Eagle long-range fighter craft and 100 credits. His last wishes were for you to enjoy life roaming the stars, fulfilling your dreams. From here on, it's all up to you.

Beginning the game at any one of three different locations, your task is simply to find ways of sustaining whatever way of life you choose to adopt. Popping into the local spaceport is always the best place to start. Here you can visit the stockmarket where you can begin your life as a trader by taking advantage of a world's import and export details to ensure you buy into the right thing.

Alternatively, view the all-important bulletin boards for job offers and opportunities. These jobs are all one-offs, ranging from simple package delivery for either civilian or military customers, to taxiing groups of people from system to system, and even assassination or smuggling jobs. Every job has a negotiable rate and if you're well enough equipped to deal with some of them, they offer a very lucrative life.

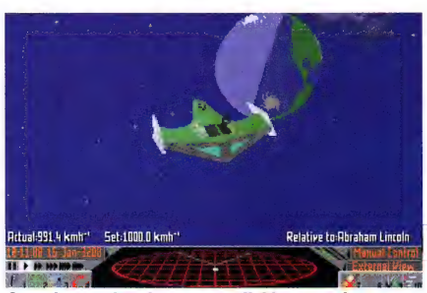
Although the original game offered a very open structure, it soon becomes apparent while playing Frontier that this is set on a completely different scale. GameTek is boasting that the game contains around 100 million planets and moons and while no one could ever hope to visit everything, you do get the feeling that you are a very small part of a big picture – this is something which games like Origin's Privateer (reviewed issue one) failed to do.

You are not alone in this huge universe – there are numerous other private traders and organisations, all of which have their own allegiances and goals in life. Governing the universe as we know it are two warring factions – the Federation (the good guys) and the Empire (the bad guys). As you travel from system to system you'll soon gain a reputation with either government, and depending on how you behave, you will be treated differently by the opposing authorities. It's actually this element which helps to add to the fun of Elite II. To start with, you stand very little risk of annoying anyone at all, but later on things can get very sensitive. ➤

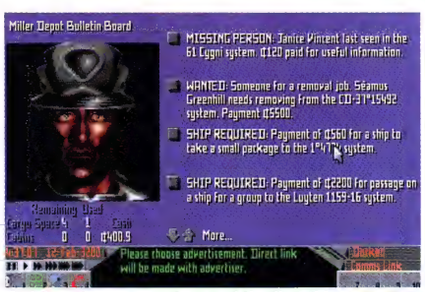
"THERE ARE GOING TO BE AN AWFUL LOT OF PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO WOULD PROBABLY BUY THE GAME PURELY BASED ON THE PEDIGREE. IF IT WASN'T FOR THE ORIGINAL HOWEVER, WOULD PEOPLE STILL LOVE IT? THE ANSWER TO THIS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY...YES"

The highest detail level seems to require an awful lot of processor power to shift around, even on a 486 it's a bit sluggish. If you want to speed things up (or play on a slower machine) you can crank the detail level right down. Unfortunately the graphics look nowhere near as good; they're fast, but lack pizazz

All of the space stations are pretty impressive to look at, but none more so than the Abraham Lincoln in orbit around Earth – it really is quite astounding



Some impressive views are available as you hop around the solar systems. Here, the Eagle fighter is heading towards Earth – note the weather systems and continents


Miller Depot Bulletin Board
MISSING PERSON: Janice Vincent last seen in the 61 Cygni system. ₡120 paid for useful information.
WANTED: Someone for a removal job. Séamus Greenhill needs removing from the CD-31°15492 system. Payment ₡5500.
SHIP REQUIRED: Payment of ₡560 for a ship to take a small package to the L°47 system.
SHIP REQUIRED: Payment of ₡2200 for passage on a ship for a group to the Luyten 1159-16 system.
More...
Please choose advertisement. Direct link will be made with advertiser.

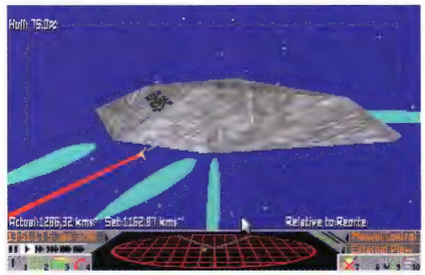
Arriving at a spaceport, one of the first things you should do is check out the bulletin board. Look here for jobs shipping packages, ferrying people around or even smuggling and assassination

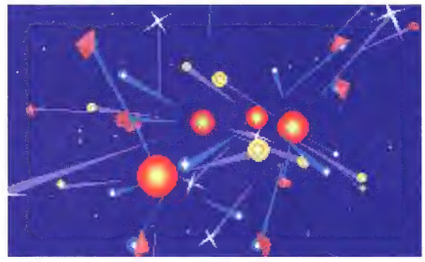
The stockmarket is vital for making money. You can find each system's major imports and exports and then take advantage of this to make yourself a fortune

REVIEW

The variety of ships offered throughout the game is superb. Everything from the original Cobra to new and exciting-looking ships are available at different ports

Getting yourself a bad reputation is strangely satisfying. Piracy and murder are good places to start, but there are so many other things to try like drug smuggling, theft, contraband...





➤ Good as the Eagle fighter is with its low-powered hyperdrive and a decent autopilot/docking computer, it does suffer from a number of limitations if you're really going to make it in the universe. As a trading vessel it doesn't have enough cargo space, as a taxi it doesn't have any cabin space, and as a fighter (for military, mercenary or pirating activities), although agile, it doesn't offer the weapons pylons to arm yourself to the teeth.

advanced Cobra MkIII – to small shuttles, massive interplanetary cargo ships and cruisers. Many of the vehicles are hellishly expensive, but with about four or five hours play time in, proficient players will soon find themselves with enough money to be able to make a reasonable choice.

It's at this point that some sort of career can be developed – out and out traders (wimps) can start dealing in large quantities of goods, while the more exciting players can take to a life of crime. Besides the basic combat system rating which depends on performance, both of the galactic governments keep a criminal record on you. Shipping dodgy stuff, or plundering helpless traders will soon gain you a reputation as a bit of a bad boy.

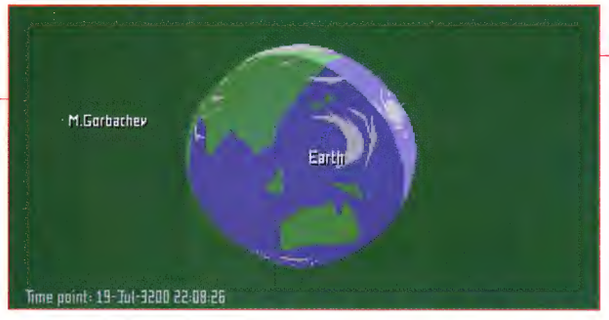
"JUST ABOUT ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE IF YOU HAVE A REALLY EVIL STREAK – YOU CAN KNOCK OUT SPACE STATIONS, LEVEL CITIES, ANNIHILATE CIVILIANS AND EVEN TAKE ON THE MILITIA"

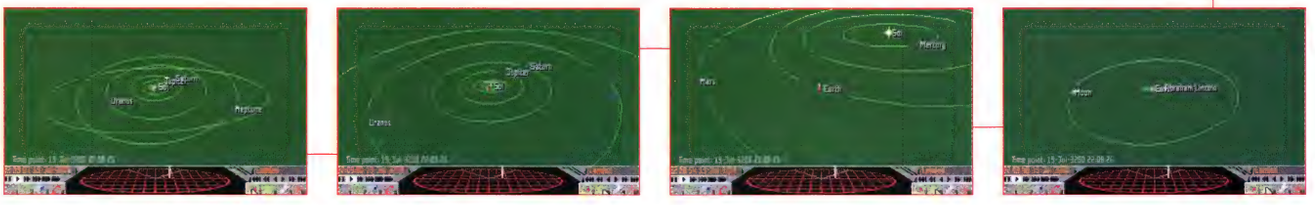
At some point you're going to be in a position where you can choose your path in life. With some serious money in the bank it's possible to visit a local ship dealer at the spaceport and start either to customise an existing vehicle or buy a totally new one. All spaceports have a ship trader, but they will often only carry a stock of around 10 to 15 new or reconditioned ships. Some will have a vast range, while others will only have a limited selection.

The ships available range from high-powered fighters – the good ol' Cobra from the original Elite is available at many ports, as well as the more

THE FINAL FRONTIER

Beginning at any planet (in this case Earth) you can view a full 3D model of it – with all spaceports visible, before zooming back to a full solar system level. This sequence of grabs displays the sort of level of detail evident throughout the game. Beginning at a planetary level you can pull back through space station orbits, moon orbits and eventually out to the point where you can see all of the bodies orbiting the central star. Views like this can be pulled out from any planet in the game...and there allegedly 100 million of them!





REVIEW

The level of detail found on the planet's surface around the spaceport is often quite superb. All of the buildings are constructed from combinations of polygons and all are fully texture-mapped

TEXTURE-MAPPED POLYGONS

In these days of video-quality visuals and Gouraud shading the graphics employed in any game are bound to come under serious scrutiny. Frontier is certainly impressive to look at, but it does suffer from a few problems graphically.

As mentioned earlier, the game really is quite vast and each system has a full compliment of planets, moons and space stations all rendered fully in 3D. Each planet is unique in appearance – Earth has its continents, other planets have craters and mountains, and all can be visited if they have a spaceport. Earth alone has a number of ground-based locations including New York, Tokyo, London, New San Francisco and Sydney as well as three orbiting space stations.

All stations and cities throughout the cosmos are filled with texture-mapped polygons which although a bit blocky in places are absolutely stunning – just take a look at the factory on the moon, or some of the variety in the space stations and I'm sure you'll agree. The only problem we found with this enormous amount of detail is that the game can end up being a bit too slow. All of the graphics in Frontier are generated 'on the fly' in true flight simulator style, and while this saves both floppy and hard drive space (the game comes on just one floppy) it does have a downside.

To make things a little bit more unbalanced, some of the space combat is far too fast. As you're hurtling through space chasing after just one renegade fighter the PC is processing the code so quickly that it's difficult to keep up with. This isn't really bad, but it's something that takes a little getting used to.

"THE GAME REALLY IS QUITE VAST AND EACH SYSTEM HAS A FULL COMPLIMENT OF PLANETS, MOONS AND SPACE STATIONS ALL RENDERED FULLY IN 3D"

The ships themselves are all absolutely gorgeous. The relatively simple polygon shapes (some taken straight from the original) have all been fully texture-mapped and coloured to present some of the most solid-looking spacecraft you're ever likely to come across. Most vehicles have ID markings as well as fully retractable undercarriages and visible engine exhausts which all make up something both impressive and believable.

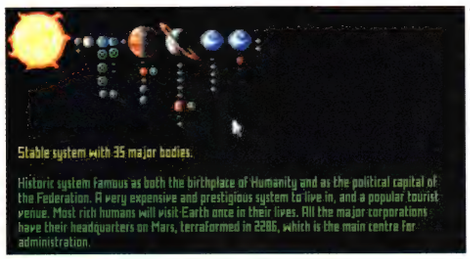
To add to the simulation aspects, the game also boasts a number of variable views that make the presentation that little bit spicier. External views can be panned around in true TFX style and this is especially handy for viewing those really impressive-looking bits like some of the exceptional space stations.

All of the physics throughout Frontier appears to be spot on...as far as we can tell. Nice little touches emerge throughout the game; things you would normally take for granted. For example, the fact that there's no friction in space means that if you thrust in a certain direction and then change the orientation of your ship it will keep moving in the same direction until you apply an appropriate amount of thrust to change course.

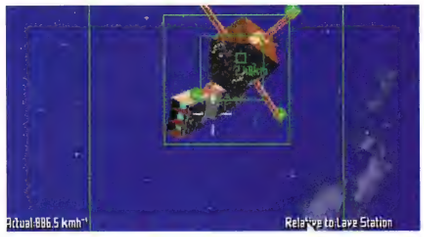
Beyond this, we are informed that a lot of the theory behind the construction of the solar systems is also very accurate – take a look at our interview with David Braben on page 46 for more information. ➤

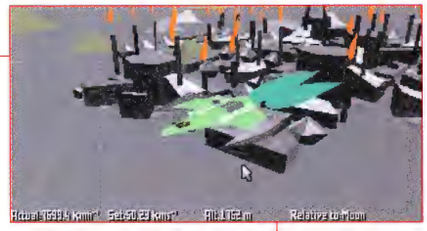
The 3D system map is particularly impressive – it can be rotated around all axes to enable you to plan your route

REVIEW

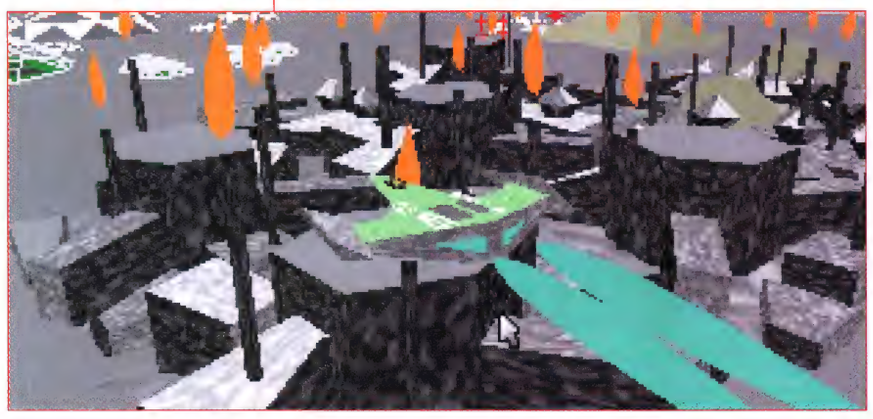

Stable system with 35 major bodies.
Historic system famous as both the birthplace of Humanity and as the political capital of the Federation. A very expensive and prestigious system to live in, and a popular tourist venue. Most rich humans will visit Earth once in their lives. All the major corporations have their headquarters on Mars, terraformed in 2286, which is the main centre for administration.

The maps can be zoomed out all the way to galactic level. This is impressive to say the very least





The factory on the moon is one of the largest structures in the game. Its huge flaming stacks and massive buildings make for a very impressive sight



➤ To be totally objective when summing up a game like this, it's important not to let your judgement be clouded by the qualities displayed in the original classic. It's very easy to be nostalgic about the greatness of Elite, and in many ways Frontier has a lot to live up to – fortunately it does manage.

The open-ended nature of the game and the freedom that this presents is one of its most fascinating elements and it's this which sets it apart from all the competition. The ability to roam the stars doing pretty much as you please is a very satisfying way to pass the time and the fact that you can choose your fate makes this as much a 'simulator' as it does a game.

Although a little frustrating to begin with it's quite an accessible game with a great deal of depth. The first few hours of gameplay time will no doubt be spent hopping back and forth between a few planets trading small quantities of various products, but once a sizeable bank balance is established it's possible to have some real fun as you build yourself your own little empire. Pretty much all the gameplay aspects are faultless, and while some of the space combat sequences initially seem a little uncontrollable, once you've equipped yourself with some powerful Navy-grade weaponry it gets a lot fairer.

"THE ONLY PROBLEM WE FOUND WITH THIS ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF DETAIL IS THAT IT CAN END UP BEING A BIT TOO SLOW. ALL OF THE GRAPHICS IN FRONTIER ARE GENERATED 'ON THE FLY' IN TRUE FLIGHT SIMULATOR STYLE"

If there are any quibbles about the game it would have to be with the graphics – while they look absolutely superb, the texture-mapped polygons do have a tendency to slow things down a bit. When flying over some of the more detailed locations such as the massive factory complex on the moon, the frame rate slows down to a decidedly uncomfortable chug even on a fast 486. Turning the detail level down rectifies things a little, but you do lose the effect somewhat.

On the whole, it has to be said that Frontier is a milestone in PC games. Possibly the most eagerly awaited sequel of all time, it's a pleasure to find that the game isn't a disappointment. If you remember the original, you'll adore this successor, but newcomers to the universe of Elite will be completely astounded. **SCORE ★★★★★**

REVIEW

DAVID BRABEN SPEAKS

"FIVE years is a hell of a long time to spend developing something – so it had to be something that would not only be a good game, but it had to be able to hold my interest at the same time. I probably spent about 18 months researching the graphical side of things and then the remaining time was spent working on the astronomical and gameplay aspects.

Astronomy is a particular interest of mine, and what I find especially interesting is the sheer number of worlds that are really out there, so what I tried to look into was making something as realistic as possible. I went along to Cambridge University where some friends of mine agreed to help me out and I found that there is remarkably little known about the star systems outside our own.

Obviously, a lot is known about the stars, especially close ones of which we know things like rotation periods, but the planets are a different matter. What I tried to do then, was to make some informed assumptions about the planets around other stars.

I had some fairly accurate details to work on, for example, if you look at the sun, or a central body around which other bodies orbit you find a mass ratio of approximately 1:750. This ratio crops up pretty much wherever you look. If you look at Jupiter or Saturn, the mass ratio between the planet and the moons is about 1:1000, but if you bear in mind that the moons have lost a great deal of their hydrogen, you end up with a pretty similar figure. If you always consider that dust gathers around a body in a certain distribution, you can then generate models on a computer that are roughly correct. What I've done is assume the density cross-section, and then partitioned that up into planets. What you can then do is work out composition and temperature by simply using black body radiation calculations. You actually get some very good results that create systems not unlike our own.

The next step for Frontier will be supplement disks that bolt into the core game code. I'll be adding in new weapons, ships and planets as well as mission objectives. Basically, I'll keep churning them out until people lose interest.

Obviously there are a lot of things that I'd like to have added, but didn't – I've purposely held back on using any alien races, purely so I can spend some more time developing something credible. I don't want to end up with something that basically looks like someone in a rubber suit – it'll have to be totally alien.

Beyond that there will be graphics enhancements – an SVGA driver of course and I'll just keep adding to the basic game. I doubt very much if I'll ever produce an Elite III, although there are possibilities for a seriously enhanced CD game. ■

"THE NEXT STEP FOR FRONTIER WILL BE SUPPLEMENT DISKS THAT BOLT INTO THE CORE GAME CODE. I'LL BE ADDING IN NEW WEAPONS, SHIPS AND PLANETS AS WELL AS MISSION OBJECTIVES"

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Just before the start of a race is always a good time to catch up with some of the most explosive crashes of the IndyCar season. Again, the replay function allows you to look at any car, and from any of the angles (TV1, TV2, gearbox, driver and so on) and suss out just what went wrong. Of course, if you weren't involved then it doesn't really matter because all it means is that there are a few less people to get in your way during the race

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INDYCAR RACING

UP until a year or so ago, not too much was known about the sport of IndyCar racing here in the UK. Apart from the few hard-core racing fans that followed the season without fail, it passed by relatively quietly. That was until a small, moustachioed Formula One racing driver (and new World Champion) by the name of Nigel Mansell decided enough was enough, and promptly got up and joined Paul Newman's IndyCar team in the good 'ol US of A. From that moment on, British TV companies were clamouring to snap up the rights to the bigger, faster cousin of Formula One, and to transmit it into the home of every motor racing fan this side of the Atlantic.

Due to the increased size and power of the IndyCars, a fast, exciting

REVIEW

High speed driving is dangerous, but it's always so much better if you take a friend along for the ride, especially if he was trying to overtake you in the first place

PC racing game was always on the cards, and when released more than a year ago, Indianapolis 500 became the first IndyCar simulator available. By the time that Formula One Grand Prix from Microprose was available the genre had become so far advanced that real racing drivers used Formula 1 to get to know the layout of tracks. Now, IndyCar Racing has taken the ingredients that made F1 such a hit and improved on them tenfold. Programmed by Papyrus – the team responsible for Indy 500 – it includes some stunning graphics and intricate gameplay, producing a very challenging racing simulation.

The first thing that must be said about the game is how incredibly deep it is. Yes, the graphics are superb and yes, the racing action is exciting, but all this pales into insignificance when put up against the sheer amount of customisation that you can incorporate into the car. Everything...and I mean everything...that could possibly be changed to give an edge over the other competitors in the race has been included here, making this a racing game playable on two levels – either as a straight IndyCar simulation, or as a game including the complexities of racing car customisation so you can work on shaving a tenth of a second off the lap times.

As is the norm for this kind of game there are various race options that ease you into the action gently. The pre-season testing option lets you take the car around any of IndyCar circuit tracks on your own, learning the correct lines to take on the corners and giving the opportunity to gain a 'feel' for the car. This is probably the most important racing option (other than the actual race, of course), because from here, whatever technical changes have been made to the car can be assessed before race day, giving you the chance to perfect the car set-up before going out against any opponents. All of this is incredibly important, but I'll get round to that later.

Zooming down a relatively long straight, the car that's visible on the left of the picture has to be overtaken before the turn approaches, in order for me to zoom up the race rankings into eighteenth place. Here I go!

It's the old problem of oversteer again. This time, spinning the track has presented me with a wonderful view of the other cars as they streak by me and wing their way to the finishing line

Choosing the single race or championship season options will place you in a race situation accordingly. The championship season spans 16 races, with the points being allocated in a similar manner to the Formula One Championship. If you choose to race a single event, then it'll go down as nothing more than a practice, albeit with other drivers on the track. The results won't be recorded, which gives any rookie drivers the chance to try their luck when up against some of the more experienced drivers on the IndyCar circuit.

As I said earlier, the most startling and unique feature of IndyCar Racing is the ability to alter your car's set-up in much the same way as real mechanics do at race time. It's no good having the driving ability of Mansell or Senna if the car you're driving has all the power and road holding of a Robin Reliant. Everything must be perfectly balanced in order for the driver to get the best out of the car – this is where a little mechanical knowledge and an IndyCar team garage (not to mention budget!) come in handy. The first thing to get straight here is that whatever alterations are made to the car, no matter how minor they seem at the time, they will always affect the performance of the car on the track.

"THE FIRST THING THAT MUST BE SAID ABOUT THE GAME IS HOW INCREDIBLY DEEP IT IS. YES, THE GRAPHICS ARE SUPERB AND YES, THE RACING ACTION IS EXCITING, BUT ALL THIS PALES INTO INSIGNIFICANCE WHEN PUT UP AGAINST THE SHEER AMOUNT OF CUSTOMISATION THAT YOU CAN INCORPORATE INTO THE CAR"

The track representation is practically the same as every other game of this type available anywhere. The only noticeable difference is that the viewing angle seems to be a little lower, making the track appear closer to the driver and enhancing the feeling of speed for the player

If you are entered in a real race, then you are going to have to make at least a couple of pit stops on the journey. Thanks to improved race car technology, most of the things that could be altered in the garage can also be tweaked here in the pits, thus giving you the chance to adapt to almost every race situation

IndyCar possesses a detailed recorder that can be used to view any point of the race up to the current time from numerous different angles. In this example, one of the TV views has been used, giving you the opportunity to see the race as TV audiences would see it, complete with camera pans and cuts

REVIEW

"Well Nigel, if there's any advice you could give an up and coming IndyCar driver, what would it be?"
"Murray, I'd have to say avoid scraping your wheel against the wall when travelling at high speed. Not only does it make you look like a complete fool, but it could be dangerous and cause severe retina chaffing."

➤ In keeping with the overall presentation of the game, Papyrus has included complex mathematical routines that accurately work out the effect of each and every variable acting on the car at any given time, hundreds of times a second. If the car has been loaded up with 30 gallons of fuel, at the start of the race it will handle very sluggishly due to the weight. As the race goes on and the fuel is used up, things will become easier thanks to the reduced weight in the rear of the car.

It's not only fuel weights that have been taken into consideration either. A racing car must maintain optimum contact with whatever track it is driving on to be controllable. The many things that can affect this include suspension settings, tyre specifications, wing settings and the camber of the tyres on the track. All of these must be taken into account to ensure that the car doesn't loose traction and spin out on corners.

In IndyCar, these factors are under the control of the player. Wing settings

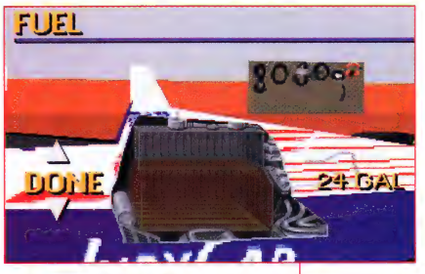
ANY WAY YOU WANT IT

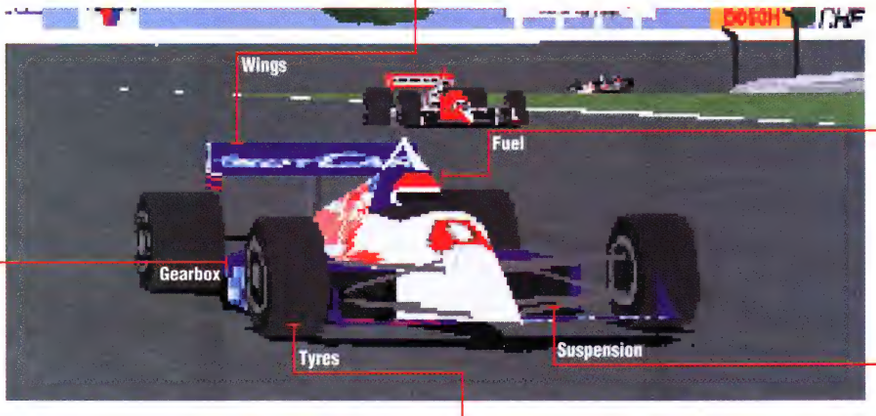
The most incredible feature of IndyCar Racing, apart from the actual graphics, is the depth of detail that can be altered on the car. Wing settings, tyre types and shock stiffness are just some of the facets of the car that can be manipulated to provide that extra bit of speed or road holding on the various tracks. None of the changes are ignored either because the way that the car handles is worked out mathematically, with things like weight distribution and traction all being taken into account when the race gets underway

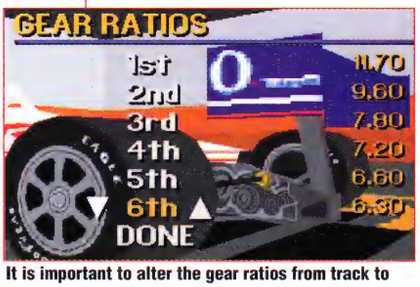
The garage is where all the repairs and changes take place. It's easy enough to find your way around, just highlight one of the options and click onto it. The relevant part of the car will then be rotated and zoomed into a position where you can easily view it, allowing work to be carried out

The wings of an IndyCar work in the opposite way to the wings on an aircraft. Instead of generating uplift, they push the car down onto the track, thus providing more traction on the road. The downside to all this is that the downlift creates drag which slows the car down, so a careful balance has to be struck

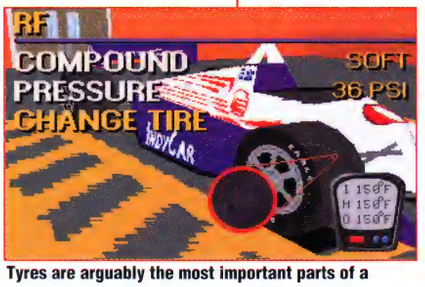
The problem of fuel is one that shouldn't be overlooked. On the practice and qualifying laps, there isn't the need to fill the tank up with 40 gallons because you'll only be racing round for a few laps and the extra weight is liable to affect your qualifying time quite dramatically



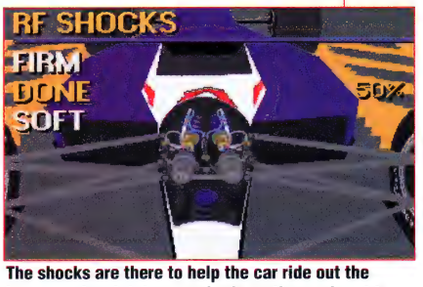




It is important to alter the gear ratios from track to track, because a super speedway, ie an oval track with just left-hand turns, is going to require different acceleration and top-end pattern than a track with lots of left and right-hand bends, such as a street track like Michigan



Tyres are arguably the most important parts of a racing car because without a good set, the chances of loosing traction and spinning off at a corner are high. Tyre tread and temperature can be checked from here, and individual camber and shock adjustments made depending upon the results



The shocks are there to help the car ride out the bumps and maintain a good grip on the road, not to provide the driver with a nice comfortable ride. They can be set anywhere between being completely soft which gives traction but allows the car to roll, to completely hard which has the reverse effect

REVIEW

Every IndyCar currently racing now has a small, lightweight camera that's in place beside the driver's head. It can take engineers less than two hours to install up to four cameras into a car, which all connect to a single switch box under the driver's seat. Smaller than a thumb, they give clear and relatively 'jump- free' pictures, allowing the home viewer to actually ride alongside the driver

can be altered allowing you to make the choice between improved corner handling or increased speed down the straights. Three types of tyres are available, and each can be set at an individual angle to the road according to specific tyre temperature readings. For example, if a reading shows you that the outside of the tyre is getting hotter than the inside, it's a fair bet that you are going to need to alter the camber and/or suspension to prevent a blow out and improve road handling. Also suspension settings can be altered from fully soft to fully hard settings, so compensating for the effects of weight distribution during the course of a race.

As well as all these traction adjustments, gearbox modifications can also be carried out, with cogs of different ratios being incorporated into the gearbox thus giving total control over how the car accelerates. This is especially important on non-speedway courses (such as Monterey), because the course isn't just a left-turning oval. This means that corners must be taken slower than usual, necessitating the need for improved acceleration which, in turn, slightly lowers top end of the car.

"CAN YOU REALLY AFFORD TO WASTE AN EXTRA FOUR SECONDS HAVING THE ANGLE OF THE REAR WING ALTERED, WITH YOUR NEAREST COMPETITOR ONLY TWO SECONDS BEHIND?"

It's not only in the garage that these alterations can be made either. If the car has been set up well during the pre-season tests (now the importance of all this testing becomes apparent), there is no reason why minor alterations cannot be completed during a pit stop in the actual race. The only limiting factor is the time needed to make an adjustment. Can you really afford to waste an extra four seconds having the angle of the rear wing altered, with your nearest

PAGE 51

A MATTER OF COURSE

MICHIGAN

Owning the distinction of being the fastest racetrack in North America, Michigan speedway is the setting for one of the most heart-stopping events on the IndyCar racing circuit. Often the scene of frequent lead changes, which delights the fans but annoys the hell out of the drivers, lap speeds at Michigan have been known to exceed 230mph. The event itself is a gruelling 500 miles long, with prevailing temperatures on the track usually quite hot. This all takes an immense toll on both the car and the drivers

NAZARETH

Nazareth is clearly one of the most uniquely shaped ovals found on the IndyCar circuit. Though on paper it is referred to as a tri-oval, some drivers treat it as though it has four or five distinct turns. At Nazareth you'll spend a lot of time turning, since the three corners are less than a third of a mile apart along the front stretch. The back straight takes on additional importance for building speed into the long series of turns. Bankings vary between four and 10 degrees, with turn three's narrow radius sporting the highest bank

NEW ENGLAND

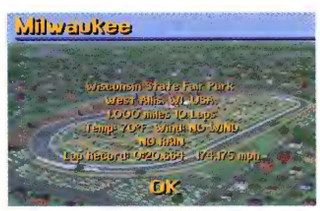
Located in New Hampshire, this raceway is one of the newer facilities to host an IndyCar event. Providing a backdrop for an exciting shoot'em-up brand of racing, the short oval differs from the one found at Milwaukee in many ways. First and foremost, New England's turns are banked higher than Milwaukee's, a lofty 12 degrees compared to nine degree corners found at Milwaukee. New England's oval also consumes less acreage, with each corner being a little tighter than those found at Milwaukee

TORONTO

Regarded as one of the IndyCar drivers' favourite circuits, Toronto is a fast, wide racetrack that naturally lends itself to some interesting cat-and-mouse chases. Though by no means an easy course to master (it does have 11 turns), it can be a very satisfying venue to race on, once all the lines have been memorised and perfected. The scenic raceway winds through the exhibition fairgrounds, using a variety of straights, fast corners and hairpins to provide one of the more enjoyable and less taxing raceways on the circuit

MONTEREY

Competition is going to be very tough indeed on this dedicated race facility that has hosted several categories of auto racing action. Consisting of sudden elevation changes, high speed corners and the famous 'corkscrew', Monterey is a track that will cripple all but the best drivers. Many of the turns are blind meaning they see you before you see them, so before race day, expect to clock up heavy amounts of practice time in order to get the feel for the circuit. Knowing every inch of a racetrack has never been more essential



MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee is one of the oldest racing venues in North America. Originally constructed for the purpose of horse racing, IndyCars have been coming to this site now for over 70 years. The four turns are each slightly banked at nine degrees which, coupled with the overall symmetry of the track, gives drivers the opportunity to utilise high speed overtaking manoeuvres on the outside as well as the more usual inside lines. It's fast, and for the novice driver it can present real problems. Better spend some time practicing before you enter this race

LONG BEACH

Set amidst pavilions and bustling convention centres, this event showcases the city of Long Beach, California. A true test of driving skill, Long Beach has two long straightways that are connected by several vicious first and second gear bends. Proper gear ratio set-up is important here to counteract the amount of gear braking that will be used throughout the race. It's also best to trade off top-end speed for that sharper burst of acceleration. The track itself is flat, wide and fast offering drivers a chance to show off their best overtaking moves

PORTLAND

Set amidst typical Pacific North-Western scenery, the track at Portland is the site of a rousing IndyCar race. The two long straights give 'general' race fans plenty of excitement, while purists enjoy watching the drivers contend with a variety of turn radiuses. The circuit is fairly flat, making for a very fast race throughout. In fact, the competition is so close that most races are left in doubt as to who the victor is until right at the chequered flag. If dry weather prevails, teams will be looking for a fast top speed, and this will increase the excitement no end

Eight courses to race on in the season ahead, and 16 IndyCars on the starting grid. It's going to be tough, so it's important to know the courses like the back of your hand. Spend lots of time on the tracks practising the racing line for each one, and getting to know how the car reacts to the particular set-up you have given it. There's no easy way to win a race, but knowledge of what you're up against could give you a slight edge over the other competitors

REVIEW

After every qualifying race the complete list of grid positions is displayed. If you're anything like me, on your first few tries you'll invariably end up right at the back of the pack. If that's the case, wait until the pack sorts itself out (usually after the first corner), and then make your assault on the leaders

During the qualifying laps you are in constant contact with the pit crew. After completing a lap, they will let you know whereabouts on the grid you would be if you were to call it a day and start the race now

➤ OK, so that's all the technical aspects of the game taken care of, but how does it actually drive? In a word, very sensitively. Yes, I know that's two words, but I'm a journalist, not a mathematician! The secret to racing a car that's capable of going over 200mph is a tender touch on the controls. There's no need to yank hard left on the joystick because, at that speed anyway, you'll succeed in nothing more than turning half a million pounds worth of motor car into a very expensive race track wall adornment. It takes a little while to get used to how hard to manoeuvre the joystick when engaged in a race, but after a couple of races it all starts to get very easy.

Like F1, there is the option to make things that much easier and have some autopilot features enabled. Auto-braking and auto-gear shift are the two that will offer the most help to the beginner, but these should be turned off at the earliest opportunity, because with them on corners become slow and you just can't coax this extra power out of the car when you need to.

In the cockpit of the car, everything has been geared towards making the job of reading important information as easy as possible. Gone are the familiar dials and gauges, to be replaced with a digital read-out that serves as a speedo, a rev counter, mpg trip computer and tyre temperature read-out. A simple press of a function key will switch between the different modes of operation, and allow the driver to manage their resources while still concentrating on the race in hand.

"THE NUMBER OF DECENT MOTOR RACING SIMULATIONS AVAILABLE ON THE PC AT THE MOMENT CAN BE COUNTED ON ONE HAND, AND OF THOSE ONLY F1 GRAND PRIX AND NOW INDYCAR RACING ARE WORTHY OF ANY ATTENTION"

Surprisingly, there are no external views available during the race. All this is taken care of in the replay section where your greatest races (or most spectacular pile-ups) can be viewed from any one of seven angles. All the cars in the game are displayed as bit-mapped polygons which, although taking up more processor time, make the opposition look a lot more real. The trackside scenery has also been bit-mapped, giving an unsurpassed level of detail.

As in actual IndyCar racing, there are two cameras mounted on the car itself – one beside the driver's head and one placed underneath the gearbox at the back of the car. The other views are taken up with TV-like portrayals of the action, with the camera cutting from one trackside perspective to another as the cars go out of shot. It's all presented in a VCR style, with the usual controls available for film manipulation – rewind, fast-forward, play and so on.

The number of decent motor racing simulations available on the PC at the moment can be counted on one hand, and of those only F1 Grand Prix and now IndyCar Racing are worthy of any attention – the differences between these two are quite substantial, not only graphically but in the style of gameplay.

In the first instance, Indy relies on a much more detailed approach to the sport of motor racing. The mathematical calculations that have been programmed into the game are really quite astounding. In fact, they are more like the sort of thing usually found in top-of-the-range flight simulations like Falcon 3.0 and Tornado. The fact that every feature of the car can be altered

"THE REAL STRENGTH OF INDYCAR RACING LIES IN THE WAY THAT IT PLAYS AND NOT IN THE WAY THAT IT LOOKS"

COMPARATIVELY SPEAKING

There are really only two games that manage to accurately portray the action and speed of motor racing – IndyCar you know all about and the other is Formula One Grand Prix by Microprose. As F1 is still relatively recent, it will be interesting to see how the two compare

It is important to know just where the corners and the straights are on the course, and both games take great pleasure in showing you them in glorious VGA. There is no real difference here because both types of display serve the purpose in hand. What I would have liked was a facility for the prospective course to be navigated with the use of a free-floating camera. It would give a much clearer indication of any corners, dips and rises that were to be encountered

The start of the race looks a lot more daunting from the cockpit of the IndyCar. Everything has been lowered, giving the impression of increased speed when the car is moving. This, plus the inclusion of the wheels and suspension struts within the view of the driver give a more convincing perspective of the road. It's a trick that works well and gives IndyCar the edge over F1 as far as actual driver's-eye view presentation is concerned

This is where the real aesthetic differences lie. The F1 representation of the outside world is fairly simple, being depicted in polygons with only very simple bit-mapped images over the top. The cars are also simple polygons, and while this makes things whiz along at a fair old rate, compared to IndyCar it looks very bland. Everything in IndyCar has been bit-mapped, from the billboards on the track to the cars themselves

REVIEW

some way and have a corresponding effect on the performance during the race makes the whole game a lot more tactical.

In F1, the emphasis was on fast graphics and a real feeling of speed. IndyCar doesn't quite manage the same speed – in fact, to get the same level of speed found in F1 when played on a 386, you would have to turn most of the detail right down or off. While this may be off-putting for some, it really shouldn't matter because the real strength of IndyCar Racing lies in the way that it plays and not in the way that it looks.

Literally hours could be spent on the pre-season test track trying to get the mix between speed and handling absolutely perfect for the Michigan super speedway, then for the next race everything can be changed around again because it just happens to be taking place on the street course of Long Beach. It is this kind of challenge that makes IndyCar Racing such a joy to play. Every course offers something different, and only those who pay their dues on the test tracks getting the balance between man and machine right, can hope to go on and emulate the success of Nigel Mansell, albeit from a much safer environment.

SCORE ★★★★★

WHAT THE PAPYRUS SAY...

"As far as the maths and car set-up routines were concerned, most of that came from the lead programmer, Dave Kaemmer. While growing up in Ohio he had racing all around him. Most of the technical stats that were implemented in the game came from him – he spent a lot of time reading books and technical manuals on the sport. This may come as a bit of a shock, but he hasn't actually driven an IndyCar. Later this month he has some classes and lessons booked so that he can climb into the cockpit and get to see just how accurate he managed to get the game.

We've had several IndyCar drivers giving input on the game, providing their opinions on various aspects of car handling. Some racing engineers have also been involved, including one from Bobby Rahal's team. They were all very impressed at how accurate the link between set-up and race car control was. Friends of drivers, including a friend of Dave Sullivan, who were also in some way connected with the sport contacted our bulletin board and commented on how accurate the game was and how well the car 'felt' around the track .

Actually, we had a lot of outside help as far as the tracks were concerned. Various people associated with the relevant venues would send us pictures of the tracks including the grandstands and so on, so that we could get them all as accurate as possible. The tracks in the game are programmed in from actual blueprints of the tracks – even the billboards are in the correct places. We went as far as we possibly could to make this the most detailed simulation of the sport that we could and anything that is not totally accurate is because of problems that we had with some form of licensing or other.

IndyCar, although looking totally different to our previous game Indy 500, does contain some of the same ideas and routines. Obviously the graphics for have been improved immensely, but the idea of the game was just a natural continuation of Indy 500.

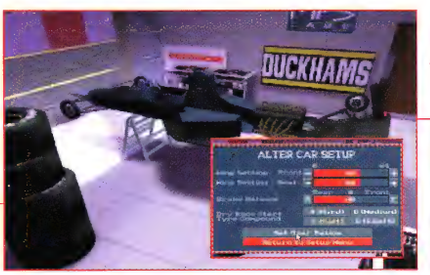
Dave Kaemmer is more than qualified to implement exact car set-up equations, having majored in maths at college. A lot of the programming in IndyCar was devoted to these complex calculations that took all the possible variables into account and made the car react accordingly.

The game was about two years in the making – right after Dave Kaemmer finished the Amiga version of Indy 500, the development work began on IndyCar. Although he has been doing other development work between that time and now, for the past nine months this is all he and the rest of the team have been concentrating on, making sure everything that could possibly be perfected in the simulation has been." ■

Ann-Marie Gianantoni is the assistant producer of IndyCar Racing, and was kind enough to offer an insight into the makings of the best racing sim on the PC at the moment

"THE GAME WAS ABOUT TWO YEARS IN THE MAKING - RIGHT AFTER DAVE KAEMMER FINISHED THE AMIGA VERSION OF INDY 500, THE DEVELOPMENT WORK BEGAN ON INDYCAR"

PAGE 53



FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX

Any race over a couple of laps is going to require you to call into the pits at least once. The pits in IndyCar give you complete control over every feature of the stop, from how much fuel you want to take on board, to slight alterations of the wings and even shock adjustments. F1 doesn't offer you this much scope for adaptation during a race, but because of the lesser attention paid to car dynamics it doesn't really matter as much as in IndyCar

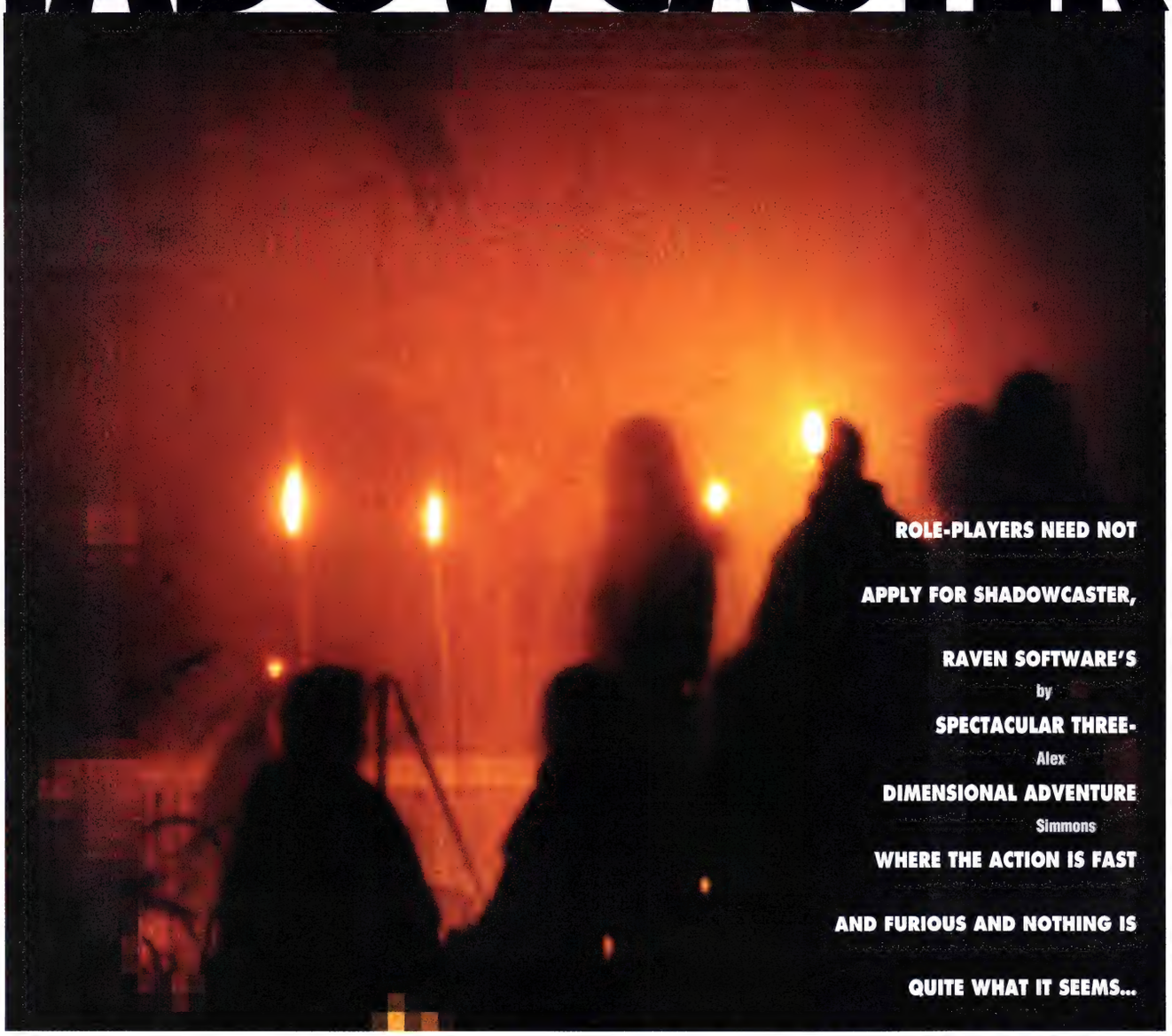
The ability to watch the race again from any angle is something which both games incorporate. F1 offers you the TV style of replay, where the cameras are at track side, along with a front and reverse out of car view. There is also no facility to fast-forward or pause the replay. IndyCar, on the other hand, lets you fast-forward, pause and play one frame at a time. The TV coverage is also better, and there are the unique in-car views offered by the car cameras

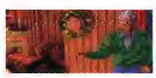
INDYCAR RACING

The car set-up features in both games, but it's much more of a deciding factor in IndyCar. Although you can alter the set-up to a fairly large degree in F1, there is neither the scope for change nor the after-effects of IndyCar. You feel that anything changed on the Formula 1 car won't really matter that much, and it's true to say that the effects of lowering the wings or altering the suspension cannot really be felt in the same way as it can in IndyCar

REVIEW

SHADOWCASTER





REVIEW

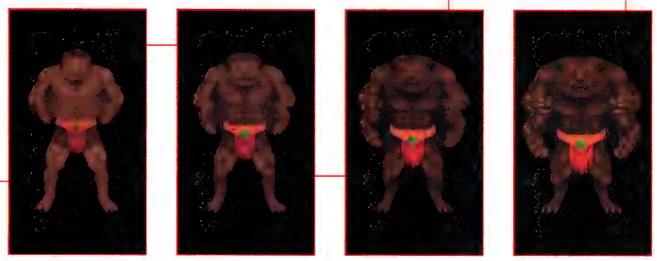
PRODUCT
Shadowcaster

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Electronic Arts

PRICE
£44.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 4Mb Ram, 25Mhz 386, VGA, Mouse, 14Mb Hard Disk Space

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Soundblaster Pro Sound Cards, General MIDI Device



'TIS a rare species, a game of such pedigree that its credit list is more impressive than the special effects in a Spielberg film. Shadowcaster is a thoroughbred in a kennel full of mongrels, a true three-dimensional adventure so awesome that the granddaddy of them all, Dungeon Master, will be turning in its grave, hoping its younger son (DMII, unsurprisingly) will be as impressive as this latest EA/Origin collaboration.

We all know that the PC is a superb machine for adventures of this kind, with the Ultima Underworld series and many others demonstrating just a little of what the machine is capable of. But forget all the other role-playing games you've seen before, because Shadowcaster is out this month and will blow your socks off, guaranteed. I loved it, and so did the large crowd of people that gathered around my PC while I explored the vast caverns in slick, glorious 3D – never have so many drooled so much at the sight of one game.

Shadowcaster is the brainchild of Raven software, the American company responsible for the excellent Black Crypt which appeared a couple of years ago. Released through Origin, 'Caster is similar in design to Ultima Underworld, but has a superior 3D engine which whisks the dungeon around swiftly and smoothly. This is hardly surprising considering the engine was designed by ID Software, the geniuses who were responsible for making 3D Wolfenstein a reality.

Shadowcaster is different in many ways to other role-playing games. It is combat based, concentrating more on swordplay rather than puzzles. To be honest, I'm not entirely sure if this was such a great idea, as the resulting game is quite linear. Just about anyone will easily be able to follow the auto-map and complete the game in a matter of days, simply by killing anything that shows its ugly face. Do so and Kirt (that's you) will be reunited with his Granddad, who was nabbed by an evil shape-shifter. Oh, that's another thing – Kirt is also a shape-changer who can morph into six different creatures, so although the player controls only one character at a time, they effectively have an entire party of adventurers under their guidance. More information on Kirt's morphing abilities in the panel titled "Shape-Shifting Shenanigans" (on page 59).

Kirt has total freedom in terms of movement, due to the game engine having been designed in such a way that he can run freely around the 20 or so levels. He can even fly and swim underwater, providing he can morph into the appropriate creatures. That is the real beauty of Shadowcaster, the ability to go almost anywhere using either the mouse or keyboard (which is probably easier). If you want to scrape your head along the dungeon ceiling, you can. If you want to swim in a sea of blood, just jump in. I suppose you could say that it's as close to virtual reality as we're going to get on an affordable PC within the near future.

As with most things in life, Kirt starts at the beginning, in a small room with a particularly nasty beastie hopping in his direction. Uh oh, cornered. If at this point you haven't yet read the section in the manual titled 'Combat', I suggest you do. However, it is quite simple – just highlight either hand and click on the view screen. Kirt will then throw punches each time the button is pressed, boxing his way past the ravenous creature.

It is highly likely that the beast will gnaw at Kirt's frail body, leaving his energy bar looking a little drained, but fortunately nearby is a vial of red liquid and a brightly-coloured staff – when these items are clicked on (to pick them up) and Kirt drinks the health potion (for that's what the liquid in the red vial is), some of his energy will be restored. ➤

"I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THAT IT'S AS CLOSE TO VIRTUAL REALITY AS WE'RE GOING TO GET ON AN AFFORDABLE PC WITHIN THE NEAR FUTURE"

PAGE 55

DEEP WITHIN THE BOWELS OF SHADOWCASTER

DUNGEON
Wolfmen patrol the dungeons, keeping a watchful eye on the cells

HALLS OF SOULS
It looks good here, but wait 'til you see it moving!

MINES
The mines are plagued by hulking Minotaurs armed with whips

PATH OF THE DEAD
These walls are made of the remains of adventurers who have failed before you

There some 23 levels in Shadowcaster, all with superbly detailed and intricate backgrounds. Needless to say, they all look spectacular, so here (Left) is a taster of what you'll see.

RIVER OF BLOOD
Take a deep breath and dive into the river of blood – but only dive under if you're in the form of Kahpa

TEMPLE
The temple is the central location in the game. You'll return here each time you meld with an obelisk

SHRINE OF THE WOLF
Inside the shrine is the evil wolf lord, armed with a staff of power

REVIEW

Treasure chests holding loads of valuables can be broken into simply by attacking them. Don't bother punching or kicking because that will take ages, use a sword instead

Portals aren't the only method of going from one level to another. Stairs often pave the way ahead, as do doors. However, stepping into the mouth of that thing ahead might not be such a good idea!

➤ Like most potions or magic items in Shadowcaster, the health potion only has limited healing qualities – a couple of gulps and the bottle is empty. However, energy (and power, but more on that later) gradually increases while Kirt is in human form. As for the other item found in the first room, the staff is a magic object which spits fireballs when in the hands of a skilled mage. Stick it in Kirt's grubby mitts and click once again on the view screen to unleash a ball of flame. A small red cursor allows you to aim the shot, making it easier to shoot creatures on the ground and in the air. Remember, the staff is limited to about five fireballs, so use it wisely.

Before Kirt's granddad was nabbed by Veste, he revealed Kirt's true identity as a shape-shifter. Within minutes Kirt will be granted his first form, by melding with the red-tipped obelisk. In a flash of light, the shape of the giant cat Maorin is yours. Kirt can change shape at will, although remaining in any form other than human will gradually drain away at his power (the blue bar in the top-left of the screen). Power is not only used for shape-shifting but also for magic and special attacks.

Kirt, in one form or another, has a number of abilities which are vital for completing certain sections of the game. Maorin has the gift of acute vision, allowing him to pick out hidden traps which are normally invisible. Caun, the minuscule humanoid healer, can turn power into energy, but is also nimble on his feet and can sneak past enemies, his agility allowing him to reach through small gaps to grab things. Caun also has the ability to summon a swarm of insects which attack a targeted enemy beast. The powers of the shape-shifter are varied and are explored in detail in the shape-shifter panel over the page.

In general, powerful magic attacks are best left for the meaner enemies, attacking the less threatening creatures with more conventional weapons such as swords. Obviously you have to get in close to use hand-to-hand combat weapons, thus giving the enemy the opportunity to retaliate. Armour can be strapped on to give a little protection, while amulets and other trinkets offer magical protection against attack. However, each form must have its own set of armour and weapons, and while objects can be switched from one character to another, generally all seven forms (six beasts and Kirt himself) are totally separate from each other, with the power and energy bars being about the only things that link them together. Anyway, Caun's chest armour (which is about six inches across), wouldn't even protect one of Maorin's nipples, let alone his entire body!

No matter how much armour Kirt is wearing, it's inevitable that he's going to die at some point and unless you've saved the game, Kirt will have to trudge all the way back to the beginning of the game. The save slots, of which there are only four, allow constant saving of the game along with a little picture and description of Kirt's present location. On

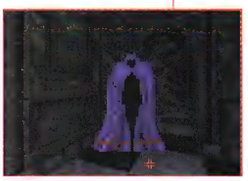
"I'VE PLAYED THIS SORT OF GAME BEFORE, BUT I'D HARDLY CALL MYSELF AN EXPERT IN THIS AREA, SO I WAS SURPRISED WHEN I COMPLETED THE GAME IN ABOUT 15 HOURS"

SHADOW BOXING

Detailed on the right are just some of the monsters you'll encounter in Shadowcaster. They lurk in every corner, cave and cavern, lusting after the blood of an unwary adventurer.

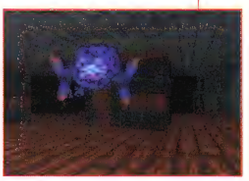
CLOAKED SORCERER

There are two sorcerers, one robed in blue and the other in red. The maroon wizard fires red power hoops which drain energy, while the sapphire mage unleashes blue circles which saps your power



FLOATING EYE

The Cyclops are powerful magic users, firing bolts of electricity and poison clouds. They hover on the ceiling and are difficult to attack unless you use a ranged weapon or morph into Ssair or Opsis



GIANT SPIDERS

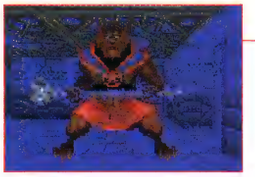
The giant spiders look tougher than they actually are. Slice off their legs with the enchanted sword, and soon they'll crumble to (green!?!) dust

WEREWOLF

The werewolves are enormous and patrol the dungeons before the mines. Their claws are razor sharp and their bite is definitely worse than their bark

WOLF KING

Think how hard a werewolf is, and multiply that by two. What do you get? The wolf king, who's armed with an electric bolt-firing staff of power



MINOTAUR LORD

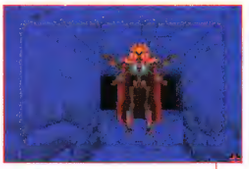
The Minotaur lord carries a huge morning star, and is protected by red leather armour and an amulet of defence. Save the bombs for this guy and keep your distance if possible

POISON MUSHROOM

The mushrooms gather in force in the spider's lair, waiting for their next victim – namely you. Attack with the sword and keep a constant eye on your energy – when it gets low, run for it!

SKELETON KING

The skeleton king raises all four arms and unleashes a constant stream of fireballs. However, he is weak in close combat, so run towards him and keep swinging the sword



SKELETON

The skeletons fall from the pikes in the misty gardens and attack with swords. Three swipes and they're dead (again)

SNAKEMEN

The snakemen have four limbs with which they viciously attack. Only get in close if you have no other option, because they are superb in hand-to-hand combat

REVIEW

Power is drained by morphing into different forms and using magic

Power Bar

Points out which way you're facing

Compass

Each time you take a hit, life force is sapped away

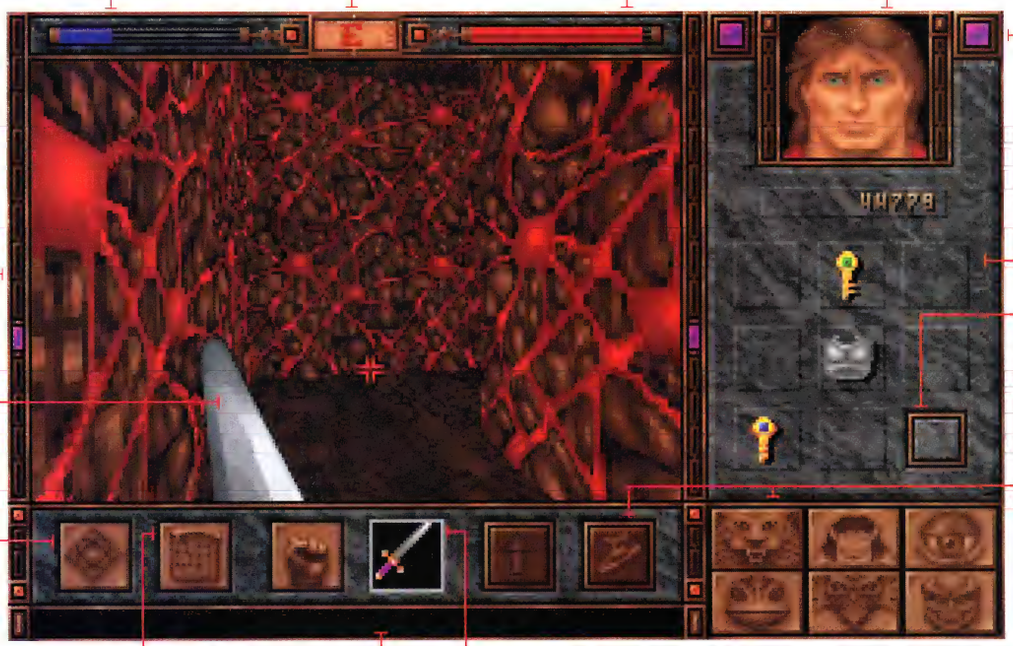
Life Bar

The portrait indicates which forms you're currently using

Portrait

Click on these gems to alter the size of the view screen

Window Gem



Click at the bottom to dive underwater, or at the top to fly

Altitude Gem

Details what your character is carrying

Inventory

All the action takes place in the view window, including combat and movement

View Window

All the character's belongings can be seen by clicking here

Inventory Overview

Ability Icons

Options

Options range from loading or saving a game, altering the game's difficulty and toggling the sound on or off

Auto-Map

As you progress, the map constantly updates itself

Text Bar

Any information appears down here

Hands

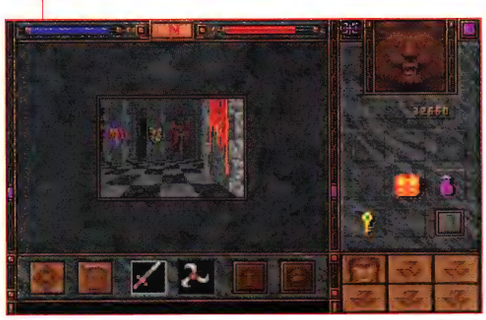
Place weapons in either hand to attack

Click here to make your character perform a special attack

AT THE CONTROLS OF SHADOWCASTER

the options screen, music and sound effects can be toggled on and off and the difficulty level changed. There are five levels in all, the default setting being the middle 'normal' level. At one end of the scale is 'wimp' which is the easiest setting, and at the other extreme is 'hero' in which the enemies are a lot tougher and things are generally much harder for Kirt and his alter egos.

Flicking the difficulty up to maximum is a pretty good idea, as the game is too easy on the normal setting. I've played this sort of game before, but I'd hardly call myself an expert in this area, so I was surprised when I completed the game in about 15 hours – I've wasted four times that amount of time on Dungeon Master, which is now nearly five years old! The reason that I found it easy was because the game is so basic, so linear. OK, you may have to use the maps to get around, but you virtually get pushed in the direction of the portal to the next level.



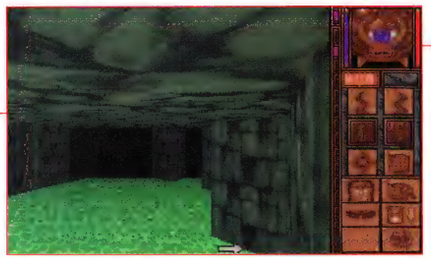
SCREEN SIZE

If you're playing Shadowcaster on a fast 486 PC (+33MHz), even when the view screen is at full size the scrolling is as smooth as a baby's bottom. For the slower 486s (25MHz), the normal screen size is just about perfect. However, if you're using a standard 386, things start to slow down and jerk. The normal size can be jerky when the screen fills up, so it's probably best to reduce the size of the view screen

REVIEW

FLYING AND SWIMMING

(Below Left) Characters like Ssair and Opsis can fly, or rather float around the dungeons in Shadowcaster. This is vital for crossing acid pools and fire pits, but quickly drains away your power
(Below Centre) All the characters apart from Maorin can swim on the surface, but only Kahpa can dive underwater where all sorts of aqua-creatures lurk
(Below Right) If you thought water was the only thing that you can swim in, you're wrong. What about blood? In the red mists of the blood river, limbed flat-fish bite with their enormous fangs



(Below) Pick up the shuriken and aim for the target above the fire. Keep firing and eventually the target will disappear. Do this for all three and the passage will open. Take care, three monsters are lurking around the corner

(Below) Maorin has the ability to see things that are invisible to human sight. The screen washes over with red and through the darkness the traps become apparent. Avoid the pressure pads otherwise the fireballs will scorch your fur off

➤ While you do get the freedom to explore, you don't really need to. The auto-map is an incredibly useful utility but I couldn't help thinking it made things all too simple. Maybe if there were more puzzles this would improve the longevity of the game, but as it stands there is very little in the way of brain-teasers – simple 'place boulder on pressure pad to open door' puzzles are about as hard as they come, relying instead on a constant stream of attacks from monsters to increase the difficulty level. Mind you, even these creatures are pretty easy to kill, providing you have the patience to run in and attack, retreat to restore energy then nip back in for another bash. Restoring energy and power can take a hell of a long time which I found quite annoying, but I'm glad Raven decided to leave out the constant hassle of having to feed Kirt!

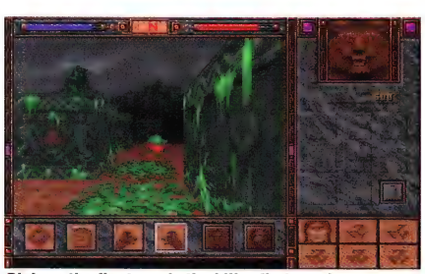
Now it may sound like I'm ripping Shadowcaster apart, but I did in fact thoroughly enjoy playing it. Not for a long time have I been so absorbed by a game right from the start, finding it very difficult to actually put the game down. Ah, it reminded me of the good old days when I'd sit up for hours, glued to the screen playing Dungeon Master...

"IF ONLY THE GAME WAS A LITTLE MORE IN-DEPTH, EITHER WITH MORE PUZZLES OR MORE LEVELS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT"

As you can probably tell from the screen shots, Shadowcaster is visually faultless. When playing on a 486, the detailed backdrops scroll smoothly and quickly with very little slow-down even when the screen is cluttered with enemies. Things are a little bit different on the less powerful 386, due to the screen jerking when monsters are near, although this can be combated by reducing the size of the view screen. There is a lot of variation in the graphics with a large selection of levels and scenery – what other game allows the player to swim underwater and fight piranhas, and then seconds later attack a floating eyeball on the ceiling? The sound, although occasionally lacking in atmosphere, is also generally excellent.

Shadowcaster, while being visually superior to Ultima Underworld, is lacking slightly in both longevity and, in my opinion, gameplay. If only the game was a little more in-depth, either with more puzzles or more levels, it would have been perfect. As it now stands, Shadowcaster is simply good, and is perfect for the beginner looking for a game incorporating an element of action. **SCORE ★★★★**

REVIEW



Pick up the float seeds the killer fly-traps leave behind. At first they seem useless, but in fact they can be used to make a bridge across the quicksand

Travelling between levels is done using the network of portals in the game. Unfortunately, you can't always step back into the gateway

Shurikens are fairly weak weapons, but do allow you to destroy the enemy before they even get close. Usually they return after they've been thrown

EXPERT OPINION

Dave Renton is the hard-working editor of Role Player Independent magazine. Dave has played more RPGs than most people have had hot dinners, so his valued opinion is worth noting

"IT looks great from a distance, but as soon as you get up close it's very pixilated and grainy. In that respect it's a bit of a let-down, but if you look at the earlier TSR games you'll notice they're also very pixilated. Shadowcaster is smooth, especially on a 486 DX2, so I think there's a lot of potential for its excellent game engine.

As I said earlier, the game engine is excellent. I think people who have played Wolfenstein 3D will have no problems getting to grips with it, otherwise it takes a good 10 minutes to get used to, to stop spinning yourself round in circles due to it being so fast. The mapping facility is damn good and very useful, I just wish more games would use this idea. Dark Sun had an auto-map thing, but the one used in Shadowcaster is much better, probably the best since Captive.

"IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ROLE-PLAYING IN THIS GAME, YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE REALLY. IT'S PURELY ACTION-BASED AND IT'S GREAT FUN"

The background of the actual game is sketchy and not very credible – most role-players could probably write better in their sleep! It's very tenuously linked together (the shape-changing and whatever), but I suppose it gives some point to the game rather than just giving you morphing abilities for no reason.

The action is quite fast and furious and Shadowcaster has the best atmosphere in a game I've seen in a hell of a long time, what with the mist and stuff like that. The underwater sections are excellent too, and make a welcome change from the rest of the game. Oh yeah, don't forget the cute strawberries at the beginning – after beating them severely they run away into the corner and hide!

If you're looking for role-playing in this game, you don't stand much chance really. It's purely action-based and it's great fun. OK, you're not getting the role-playing element, but you do get to kill a hell of a lot of things! I'd recommend it for hack 'n' slash role-players – they'll absolutely love it." ■

SHAPE-SHIFTING SHENANIGANS

Kirt is human in appearance but holds the power to morph into six other forms. One of the few remaining shape-shifters, Kirt can heal his wounds when he is a human (albeit slowly), and this is the only form in which he can regain power.
Kirt has the ability to jump as well as perform his powerful kick attack

KIRT

MAORIN

The Maorin is a giant-sized cat with six limbs – two legs and four clawed arms. It is more resilient than its human counterpart and is also faster on its feet. However, the gigantic feline has a dislike for water and thus drowns quickly.
Maorin has the gift of acute vision, allowing it to see things normally hidden to human sight. It can also jump

Although it may look quite harmless, the green frogman is surprisingly tough, can breathe underwater and is excellent in hand-to-hand combat. Kahpa can channel power into either an electric shock or sonic attack, both of which cause extra damage in water

KAHPA

SSAIR

Dragon-like in appearance, Ssair has no legs and therefore floats around the dungeon. It is tough and powerful, able to both withstand and inflict enormous damage.
Ssair can breath fire at the expense of power, but can also whiplash its opponents with a strong tail attack

CAUN

Caun is humanoid in appearance, standing a mere two-feet tall and weighing 40 pounds. It is an ineffective fighter but a skilled healer – in Caun form, Kirt will heal 10 times faster.
Caun also has the ability to jump, and to perform the power-consuming rapid heal spell. In times of darkness it can create light, as well as a protective magical shield. Using its agility, Caun can grabs things through bars and sneak past enemies. It can summon a swarm of insects which can be directed to attack the enemy

GROST

Grost is a giant stone golem – hard as rock and as strong as a mountain. It can punch through solid walls and is almost invulnerable to physical attacks. It can also survive in extremely hot conditions.
Grost can make the ground tremor and the earth shake by stamping its feet, and can paralyse an enemy just by touching it

The Opsis looks like a floating eye with tentacles. It is poor in physical combat, but is an excellent sorcerer. It can float, allowing it to pass safely over boiling lava and even float over the heads of ground-based enemies. Opsis can throw cold blasts or gaze into the eyes of enemies causing sheer terror. It can cast a spell which slows down time, or create magical missiles which blast the enemy. Opsis can cast the most powerful spell, the Death Blow which melts almost any enemy with a single shot. Opsis can also sense the layout of the level, allowing it to map unvisited areas of the dungeon

OPSIS

REVIEW

CLASH OF STEEL

CLASH OF STEEL IS PROVING TO BE A VERY POPULAR WWII STRATEGY SIM. AFTER SPENDING MORE THAN A MONTH WITH THE PRODUCT WE ASK WHETHER IT WILL STAND THE TEST OF TIME...

By Robin Matthews

PRODUCT
Clash of Steel

SOFTWARE HOUSE
SSI/US Gold

PRICE
£34.99

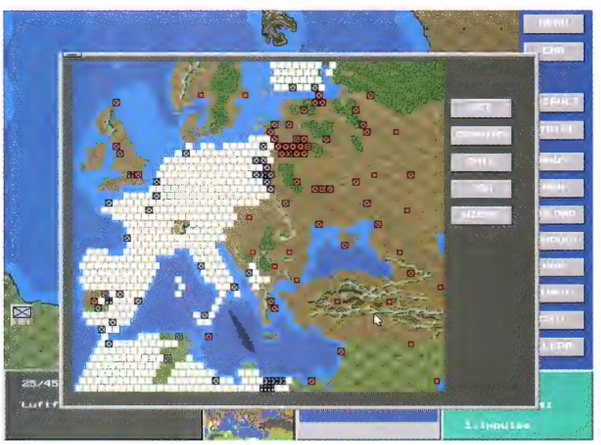
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 3.3 or above, 2Mb, 386, VGA, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards

CLASH of Steel is a strategic wargame set in the European theatre during World War 2. Running from September 1939 to August 1945 it puts you in the role of Supreme Commander of either the Axis or Allied forces in a series of stand-alone scenarios, any one of which can then be continued as a campaign.

"THIS IS NOT ANOTHER TITLE BASED ON SSI'S ELDERLY GAMES ENGINE...IT'S A NEW GAMING SYSTEM THAT STILL BORROWS MUCH FROM BOARD-WARGAMING AND HAS SIMILARITIES WITH BOTH THIRD REICH AND HIGH COMMAND"

This is not another title based on SSI's elderly games engine (with Conflict in Korea being the latest title) it's a new gaming system that still borrows much from board-wargaming and has similarities with both Third Reich and High Command.



This screen shows who controls what. The white area is the Axis controlled area shortly after the taking of Gibraltar and shows the anti-clockwise sweep along the Med, currently held up at Alexandria

The wargaming world stretches west to east from Ireland to Russia, and north to south from Norway to North Africa. The play area is divided into a hex system, with each hex representing approximately 50 miles. Each of the game turns is two months long.

Clash of Steel (COS) is unusual in that each game turn is divided into a random series of impulses – each turn starts with an economic phase in which production points (the general resources available) are calculated and then there are a number of impulses which effect production. This gives COS an air of unpredictability that can keep you on the edge of your seat, and can thwart the most carefully laid plans.

Playable as either one player Vs computer, or as two player the conflicts are basically land based, but there is a reasonable naval and lesser air power involvement. The scenarios are Poland 1939, Fall of France 1940, Operation Barbarossa 1941, Drive to Stalingrad 1942, Kursk 1943 and D-Day 1944. Winning is straightforward with the Allies victorious whenever Germany and Italy are conquered, and the Axis come up trumps if they conquer England and Russia.

Terrain types play a large part with the usual city, river and mountain types plus 'fort'. Each scenario has some fortifications already constructed, but engineer units can construct more, which when defended are particularly difficult to neutralise. To balance this there is a limited number of paratroop units that can disable the terrain effects of both forts and river hexes.

The use of those precious resources or production points (PPs) is the key to success in COS. They are calculated at the beginning of each gaming turn and are based on the number of friendly cities, resource centres and convoys. In a conquered country all those PPs go the victor so the raison d'être is rapidly established.

The player must then allocate their PPs, with a chunk automatically being used up to re-fit battle worn units. The remainder can then be used to buy land, sea or air units, spent on strategic bombing campaigns or dedicated to research and development.

Multiple rocket launchers, radar, panzerfaust, sonar, rockets, jet planes, anti-tank guns and heavy tanks can all have PPs used on them, and later as the results filter through units will have certain strengths improved. This resource management forms an important part of COS, and although individual scenarios may be won by ignoring such factors, the only way to 'win the war as opposed to the battle' is

WORLD WAR 2:

SEPTEMBER 1939 – After a few attacks the Polish Brigades cannot compete with the more modern German Army – Guderian's Panzers punch through and head towards Warsaw

MAY 1940 – The Maginot Line is outflanked and the Germans head for the Eiffel Tower

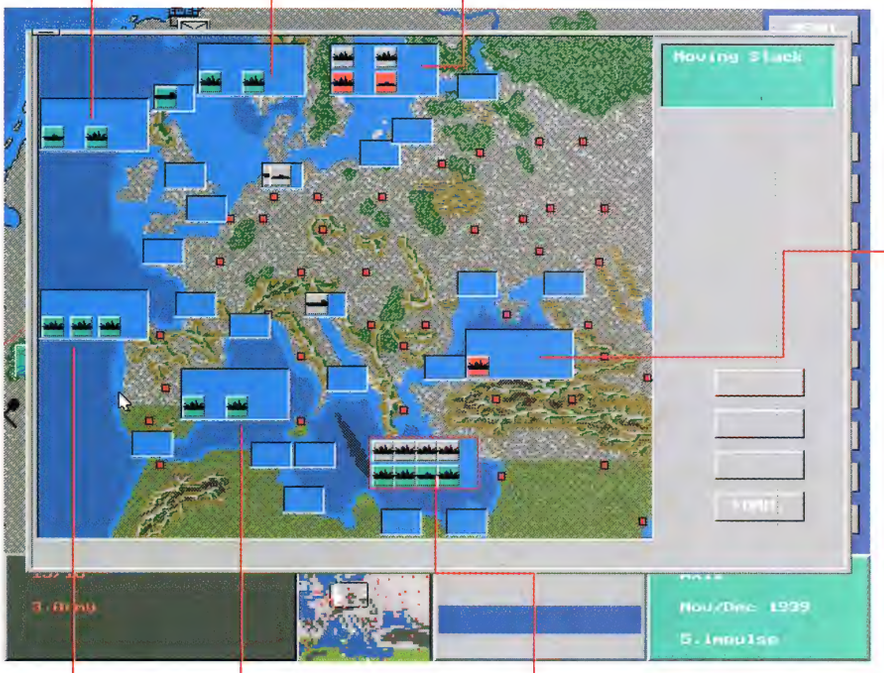
REVIEW

to formulate a definite long-term strategy.

The manual needs to be re-read several times to pick up all the subtle 'chrome' rules that embellish COS. Other than the optional rules of Hitler's Stand and Die Orders, and of the Japanese attacking Russia, there are special rules as regards Blitzkrieg, fortifications, Malta, special combat skill effects, Mulberry artificial harbours, British Homeguard and the results of research and development.

Weather greatly effects gameplay by altering aspects including the colour of terrain, the number of impulses and the effectiveness of units. There is no stacking of units in COS so the playing area is uncluttered and is presented in good quality hi-res VGA graphics. Sound support is robust with a stirring movie-style soundtrack and effects that would not be amiss in a school playground!

Naval units have their own display with the theatre split into various ports and sea zones. Movement and combat is very simplified with a single dice roll seeming to decide whether the U3 or the Warspite gets sunk. Ships can be put into one of three modes of



North Atlantic
Before any clash with the Bismarck, the HMS Hood and the Ark Royal protect the critical North Atlantic convoy routes

North Sea
Two elderly British battleships, HMS Nelson and HMS Malaya guard the waters around the base at Scapa Flow

Baltic Sea
The German Battlecruiser patrols the Baltic Sea keeping open a crucial convoy route. At the present a non-belligerent Soviet sub and light cruiser stand on station

Black Sea
Axis transports wait in port for the Mediterranean battles to be resolved

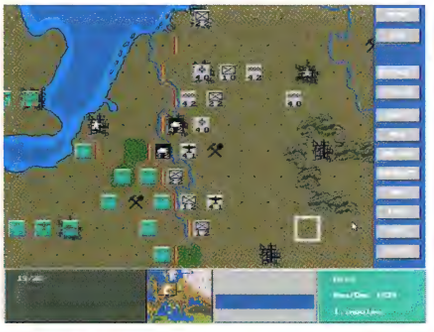
South Atlantic
A strong Allied task force – The Rodney, Valiant and Queen Elizabeth, unopposed in the shipping lanes

Western Mediterranean
HMS Warpspite and the French cruiser Lorraine, both at combat readiness in Gibraltar

Eastern Mediterranean
Currently the busiest sea zone. The pride of the French Navy Dunkerque and Gacoine along with with Royal Navy HMS Repulse and aircraft carrier Glorious

FROM SEPTEMBER 1939 TO JULY 1941...

SEPTEMBER 1939 – At the end of the third impulse in the same turn, Warsaw is surrounded and Poland is about to capitulate with hardly any losses – other than the good old Ark Royal which has sunk the U Boat 'U1'



NOVEMBER 1939 - With Poland now firmly under the Axis yoke, the Germans drive westwards. Using operational and reserve movement the attack on the Benelux countries is about to start

NOVEMBER 1939 – Belgium falls and the Wermacht masses on the non-fortified frontier with France

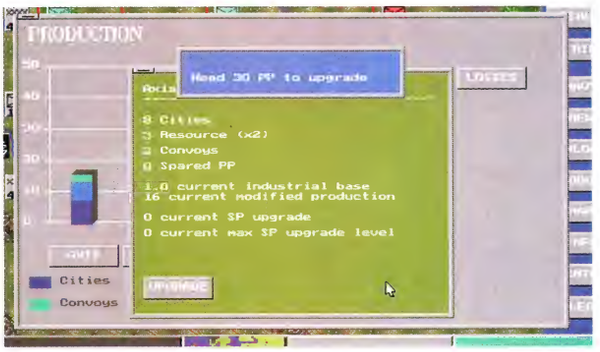
JULY 1940 – Paris is taken and the Panzers can almost roam at will through Western Europe, but what's that island there?

SEPTEMBER 1940 – A Vichy government is installed and attacked. Reserves use Bordeaux as a staging post and the Italians join in. The German paras and the engineers are the most important axis units

JULY 1941 – Spain was a tough nut to crack (use diplomacy if you can) but now it's full-throttle to the Rock. That single Allied unit is a beleaguered BEF with nowhere really to go

JULY 1941 – Gibraltar falls and Panzers use the land bridge to pour into North Africa. The Med may become an Axis lake as the Elite Italian Ariete division and Guderian's tanks hammer eastwards

REVIEW



Upgrading your performance from the info/status screen, improves your unit's strength points. You need 30 PPs and sufficiently high R&D in heavy tank and anti-tank

Distribution of units and the complete battlefield

aggressiveness, from raiding, through transport and all-out combat. A couple of hypothetical ships are thrown in such as the never-completed Graf Zeppelin and the Sedylitz.

Air power is represented with a generic 'strategic bombing' option where you spend PPs to attack one of a particular type of industrial target, and by ground strike which is conducted by individual air units. These are treated in a similar way to ground units and can be destroyed and created accordingly.

Another nice touch in COS is the introduction of diplomacy in the politics options. At the start of each impulse you are awarded a number of political points that can be used in attempts to 'persuade' other countries to join your side. Each time you exercise diplomacy that country's rating alters – once it gets to 100 points it then aligns itself with that side. Get your 'persuasion' wrong and you can irretrievably push a potential ally towards the enemy.

Some detailed rules cover amphibious operations, sea transport and the important requirements for supply. Hardened wargamers will take to COS like a DUKW to an invasion beach, for others the subtleties may take some time to assimilate but it's all fairly logical.

As far as criticisms go, the presentation of Naval combat and movement is a bit off-putting and the use of an icon system to show combat resolution is confusing and not informative. Also, on the one hand the units are personalised with the use of well-known generals of the period and the naming of warships, but when it comes to the rocket units, instead of the German Nebelwerfer and Russian Katyusha all we get are MRLS.

A small amount of additional detail would make a vast difference and enhance what is an extremely playable product. Also the 70 page manual could have had a much better layout and a larger tutorial or extra examples of the more subtle rules would have been welcome.

Each scenario can last a couple of hours and the whole of World War 2 could take about 80-100 hours. They get progressively tougher and the action in Russia gives a very good feel for just how much both Napoleon and Hitler took on.

Well presented, Clash of Steel is not perfect, but it is a very enjoyable and addictive wargame that has considerable potential. So baton down the tank hatches, cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war... **SCORE ★★★★**

The diplomacy map. Use the save game facility to save/restore until you get the political result you want

"EACH SCENARIO CAN LAST A COUPLE OF HOURS AND THE WHOLE OF WORLD WAR 2 COULD TAKE ABOUT 80-100 HOURS. THEY GET PROGRESSIVELY TOUGHER..."

CLASH OF STEEL - CRACK OPEN THE ROCK

There are a couple of critically important locations in Clash of Steel. The bottleneck at Constantinople, the Russian cities of Leningrad and Stalingrad and the island fortress of Gibraltar can almost decide the eventual winner of the war. Here's a closer look at the scenarios...

GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar is one of the most important hexes on the board as the gateway to the Mediterranean. If the Axis succeed in taking it (anti-historical of course), first the Axis have a safe land bridge into Africa, Malta (and its interference with Axis supply in the Med) can be taken out, Allied PPs take a nose-dive, the Allied fleet is split and the Axis one is joined. No other hex in the entire game is as important (although Leningrad is probably next) and the seeds for taking it must be sown early on.

An alternative position to the one shown in our sample scenario where Spain has fallen in with the Axis. There are lots of extra Spanish units, useful for the meat grinder of the Russian Front

The conquest of Poland should be achieved quickly by throwing forward the Panzer divisions and softening up the under-equipped, but brave Polish divisions with the Luftwaffe units. As soon as you have taken Warsaw, transfer troops as quickly as possible back to the Benelux/French border and make sure that you are developing paratroopers.

In the fall of 1939 hit Benelux with every Luftwaffe and Panzer unit you have. Now wheel anti-clockwise and sweep through France and onto Paris. Don't waste resources on the units in the Maginot Line because they will eventually crumble when you have them surrounded, and the Fallscirmjager come into action.

France can be tough because you need to take all cities before they capitulate – accept a Vichy government as soon as it's offered (this removes ALL French units permanently and eliminates ALL Allied units in France!), then in the next breath declare war on the Vichy State.

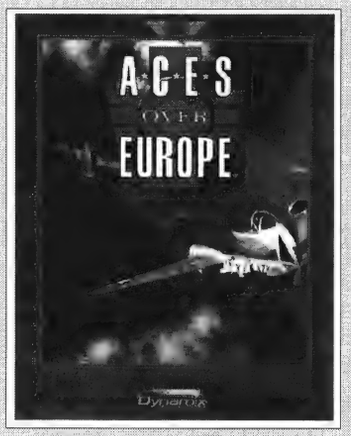
Now mass everything you've got on the Spanish border (including the Italians who should now have joined the fray) and with a little diplomacy Spain should throw its hand in with the Axis. So either by attacking or reinforcing the Spaniards throw everything towards Gibraltar. Rebase air power, use reserve and operational movement to get Panzers and some heavyweight army groups down there, attack from all sides and use paratroops to slog away and crack the Rock.

Once Gibralter falls, the anti-clockwise sweep should continue as you roll the Afrika Korps through North Africa. Note that there is an error in the original manual – to conquer the Commonwealth you must also take Alexandria. Don't leave your hard-earned prize unprotected, but if there are no Allied transports left in the Mediterranean after Gibraltar falls the rest of this area can almost be stripped of defenders after you push around to the east.

As far as the Allies are concerned they must take the initiative with either holding up the Germans in 1939-40 or by being more aggressive in North Africa, but that as they say is another story.

REVIEW

No.1 for PC Games



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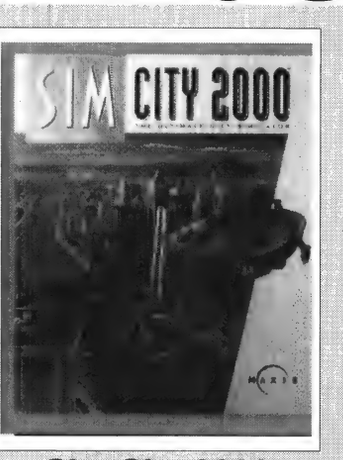

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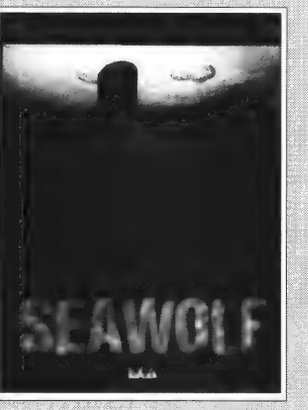

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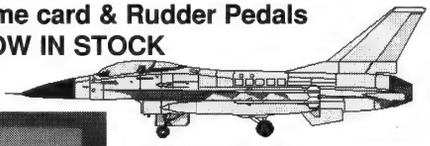

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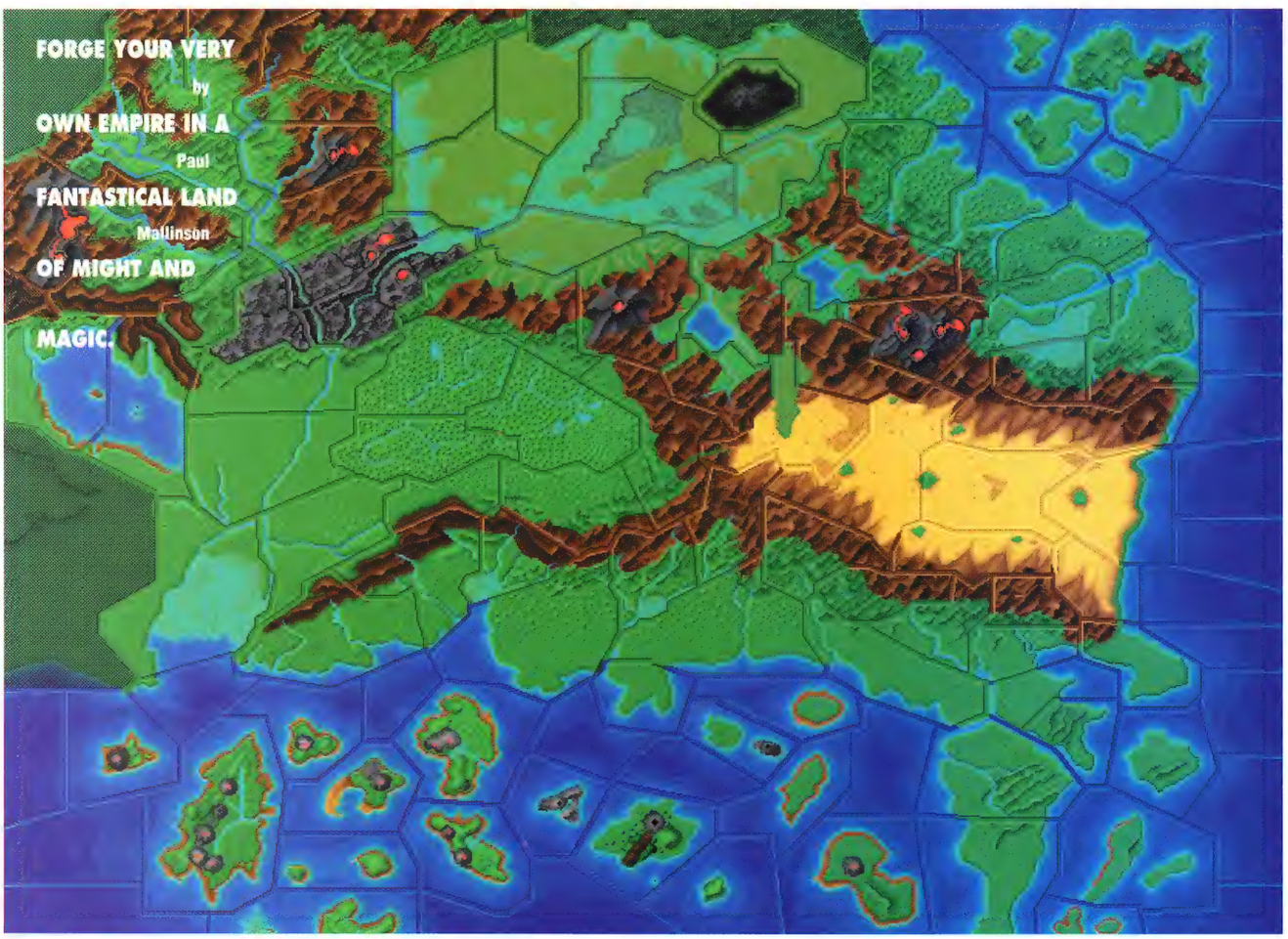


FANTASY EMPIRES

REVIEW

FANTASY Empires is set in the land of Mystara, a continent represented by a very colourful scrolling map divided into 98 different regions, which are then subdivided into 15 separate principalities. Each region is able to support or create a variety of troops, for example any region that lies within the Grand Duchy of Karameikos is able to create fighters, clerics and magic-users, whereas those regions encompassed within Rockhome can produce only dwarves. Clicking on the right mouse button over one of these regions will reveal their inherent characteristics. Once you've discovered which land areas produce the more sought-after races (ie magic-users), you will then

realise the importance of securing these areas with your troops.

You begin building an empire by forming a small army around your main forces and by training troops of fighters, elves, dwarves and magic-users and constructing defensive buildings, such as keeps, armouries and castles. The game is turn based, allowing you to utilise as many of the available options as necessary before surrendering control to another character. You can move your troops and send them on quests (which are useful for gaining experience points), plus a variety of other commands.

As your empire steadily grows, so unfortunately do your enemies' forces, therefore you must keep an eye on them as much as possible. Up to five players, human or computer-controlled, can participate in either a full campaign or a shorter pre-set scenario. Players can create their own characters using the in-depth character creation system bolted onto the game, and your favourite characters can be saved to disk for later retrieval.

There is one character who watches over and keeps tabs on the entire game, and that is the Dungeon Master himself. Using what SSI claims are revolutionary AI routines, the Dungeon Master is there to offer advice throughout the game. If your empire is lacking in a certain department, the DM will tell you so (in a rather husky, mumbled voice that is sometimes hard to understand).

Magic plays a huge part in Fantasy Empires and the Dungeon Master is there to provide it – ask him to invoke the book of spells and he draws it from the bowels of the earth (beautifully animated and extremely dramatic it is too), giving you the opportunity to select a spell from the nine available. Although remarkably effective and polished, the DM's animation tends to slow the game down, so the option to switch it off is welcome.

Spells such as Death, Earthquake, Meteor Swarm and Creeping Death can be selected and used on an enemy position. The Dungeon Master will then draw power from either the druid (blue), cleric (green) or magic-user (red) orbs before unleashing the spell in the form of an animated sequence.

As your empire grows it is inevitable that you will come face to face with the opposition, at which point the display will switch to an overhead view for the battles. First of all you must deploy your forces throughout the field, either inside your battlements if you've got any or outside enemy castles if you're attacking. Battering rams and catapults can also be set up prior to attack to bombard the enemy. The joystick is used to control these overhead battles, with you taking the role of the most powerful member of your team with the aim of destroying the opposing forces with fireballs, double-handed swords, axes, arrows or whatever else at your disposal.

If two human opponents are fighting each other, the display switches to a split-screen affair. The biggest problem with these battle sequences is that they slow down when the screen is full of sprites. There is an option to alter the character display ratio (ie 1:20 means that for every one man on screen, there are in fact 20 fighting for him), but on anything less than a 486 33, the slow-down still rears its ugly head. ➤

"MAGIC PLAYS A HUGE PART IN FANTASY EMPIRES AND THE DUNGEON MASTER IS THERE TO PROVIDE IT - ASK HIM TO INVOKE THE BOOK OF SPELLS AND HE DRAWS IT FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH, GIVING YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO SELECT A SPELL FROM THE NINE AVAILABLE"

Be aware of land value. If you secure a piece of land that allows growth of magic-users, then you would be pretty stupid to fill the land with fighter-building armouries. You will not be able to replace existing buildings unless they are destroyed by the enemy

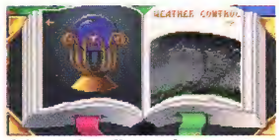
You can send messages to the other players or offer them a truce. This message system really comes into its own when two or more human players are involved in a game

Fantasy Empires takes the Dungeons & Dragons universe and simplifies the game engine into something akin to that of a more linear board game – let's say Risk, for the sake of argument. When I first sat down to play this game my initial thoughts were that it was quite similar in style to US Gold's Kingmaker, in the way you control shield counters and move them over segregated sections of an overall map. Some hours later my opinion had changed – Fantasy Empires may look similar, but it sure as hell plays very differently

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE

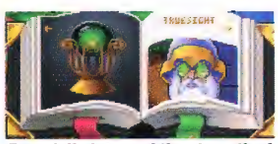
Rain burning rocks down onto your opponent with a meteor storm

If your army is lacking in numbers, raise the dead to swell your ranks



Stir up a humdinger of a storm to smash the enemy castles

A huge swarm of flies carrying deadly diseases will kill them off



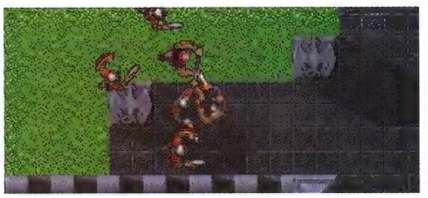
For a full picture of the strength of the enemy, take a good look

Earthquakes are useful for destroying opposing encampments

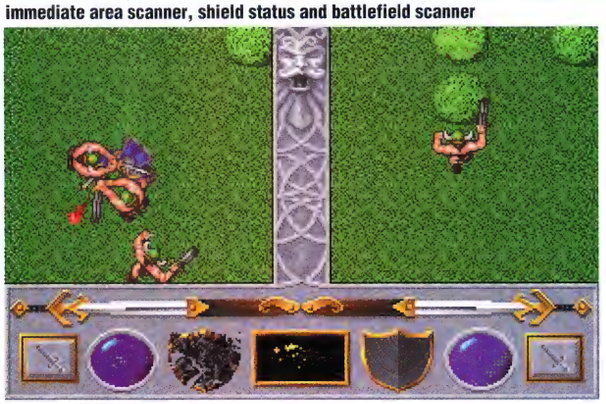
REVIEW

STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC

Strategic Simulations Inc, founded by Joel Billings in 1979, is one of the software industry's biggest success stories. It was formed with the goal of fulfiling the needs of war gamers like Joel himself, who were looking for ways to use personal computers. "Ever since SSI's formation, we've always wanted to publish a spectrum of software for the sophisticated game player – not just war and fantasy games," remarked Billings. Now, some 14 years later, SSI is on the verge of a product avalanche, with Fantasy Empires being just one of the eight games it plans to release around the Christmas period.



Split-screen overhead battles can be painfully slow if the screen is full of movement. The panel at the bottom shows (left to right) current orders, immediate area scanner, shield status and battlefield scanner



➤ Fantasy Empires does have a number of flaws which, if they had been ironed out, could have resulted in a game that was incredible rather than one that is merely excellent!

My biggest gripe with this game is that at the end of a round it can become a real chore clicking through the numerous information boxes telling the player that some new troops have been trained or that someone-or-other has returned from a quest, especially if there are quite a few characters playing the game. Maybe if there was a table that appeared between rounds showing ALL troop activities in one fell swoop, this would speed things up a bit. These delays made me rather reluctant to send troops on quests, which is essential for building up experience points. Spell animation also slows the game down so an option to toggle these on or off certainly wouldn't have gone amiss.

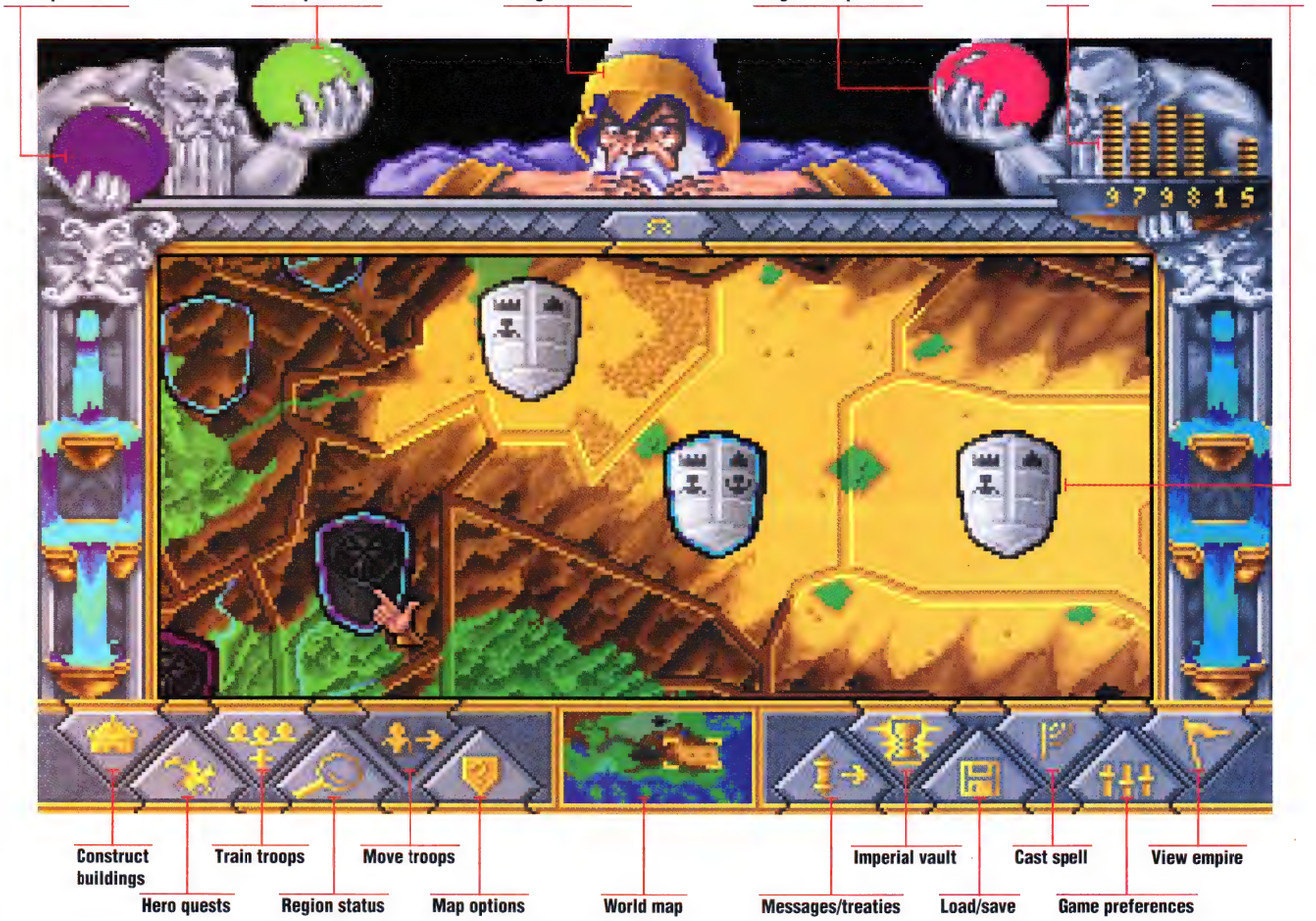
Fantasy Empires is an excellent game, with the problems mentioned above being relatively minor niggles that could really be put down to my own impatience! The graphics cannot be faulted, they're incredibly detailed and well animated – the way the undead skeletons leap out from the ground is superb, and the animated Dungeon Master is an absolute joy to watch. Building a massive army is a slow but satisfying process and useful strategies are easy to pick up.

I really enjoyed playing Fantasy Empires, so much so that I found it difficult to tear myself away from it to write this review. Clichéd? Maybe, but it's certainly true! **SCORE ★★★★**

"I REALLY ENJOYED PLAYING FANTASY EMPIRES, SO MUCH SO THAT I FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO TEAR MYSELF AWAY FROM IT TO WRITE THIS REVIEW. CLICHÉD? MAYBE, BUT IT'S CERTAINLY TRUE!"

REVIEW

IN CONTROL OF YOUR ACTIONS



EXPERT OPINION

Dave Renton is the hard-working editor of Role Player Independent magazine. Dave has played more RPGs than most people have had hot dinners, so his valued opinion is worth noting

"The game engine seems fantastic. It's really, really good. With it being basic D&D I didn't expect too much from it, but I was pleasantly surprised! It's very reminiscent of a game called Greyhawk Wars that TSR brought out a while ago. It's a typical, strategical war game type of program that, while not as advanced as a 'proper' war game, still packs a fair punch.

The graphics are spectacular but at some points in the game they become quite bit-mapped. The Dungeon Master however, is a really nice touch. The multi-player games I found extremely interesting, especially the way you can trade messages with other characters in the game.

"MULTI-PLAYER GAMES I FOUND EXTREMELY INTERESTING, ESPECIALLY THE WAY YOU CAN TRADE MESSAGES WITH OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE GAME"

If people enjoyed Greyhawk Wars, then I think they should seriously look at Fantasy Empires. As far as I'm concerned, this is one game that I'm going to be playing for quite a while to come. I'd recommend it to a whole spectrum of gamesplayers – SSI has done a good job with this one." ■

It's a good idea to check through the character stats before choosing your computer-controlled opponents. Initially I dived straight in, and without realising, chose the strongest, most invincible Non-Player Character (NPC) in the entire game!

The Creeping Death spell buzzes in to infest the enemy. Although this spell doesn't actually destroy any buildings, it's a very effective eradicator of enemy troops

There are a number of different view modes available to show your empire's region status. These differences are shown by changed shield displays – here I've chosen to view buildings and troops only

The overhead battle sections are great, but slightly flawed. You can be controlling quite a high-level fighter when all of a sudden, he is instantly killed by an undead soldier. Am I doing something wrong here?

Choosing a scenario will load up a pre-defined empire and characters. You'll have a specific objective and a certain amount of time to do it in. These scenarios are relatively short (campaign games can go on for days) and are useful for learning the game's subtleties

Check out the wonderfully fluid animation as you raise undead soldiers to join your army. They force themselves out of the ground and leap up into the air!

Moving troops from one place to the next is done by transferring them from the present scroll to the destination scroll. The left mouse button transfers them quickly, the right one moves the entire battalion

Sending your troops on quests is essential for gaining experience points. And what are experience points? They increase the level of character, with level eight being tops

Training troops costs money and time. The higher the character, the longer the wait. All troops in the process of training are shown in a table with the estimated time of arrival displayed alongside

REVIEW

THE ULTIMATE

Pro Action Replay
Designed and Manufactured by DATEL ELECTRONICS

IT'S HERE!

MORE ENERGY
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MORE LIVES

INFINITE GAME BUSTING CODES

ACTION REPLAY GIVES YOU THE POWER TO BUST YOUR GAMES WIDE OPEN!

INFINITE CHEAT GENERATOR
Action Replay has a powerful CHEAT FINDER feature that actually scans through the game in its FROZEN STATE and finds the locations that control lives, ammo, objects etc. etc. in fact anything within a game that can be counted! The unique CHEAT GENERATOR then gives you a cheatcode for that game. Simply press a key to restart the game and you are invincible!! Cheats can be saved to disk or entered again at a later date.

PROGRAM SAVE
Freeze your program at any point and save entire contents of memory, including extended memory, to floppy or hardrive. When you reload the program it will resume at the point it was frozen. Ideal for saving a game at a difficult point or for programs with tedious 'password' loading systems.

SCREEN GRABBER
At the press of the Action Replay freezer button you can grab a standard VGA screen from any program and save it out as a standard PCX file suitable for your graphics package.

SLO MO FUNCTION
Allows you to play a game at your own pace. Select from about 10% to full speed.

MONITOR FEATURE
Display the entire contents of memory in its frozen state. View as HEX or disassembly includes a memory search facility. Output to printer available.

FREEZER DOS COMMANDS
Directory, format and save commands are available even when the program is frozen.

VIRUS CHECKER
Powerful virus scanner searches for viruses and alerts the user if detected.

POWERFUL HARDWARE
Action Replay is a powerful plug-in card with both advanced program freezer circuitry and over 1MB of its own on board Ram so it uses less than 1K of the PCs own memory!

SIMPLE INSTALLATION
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System requirements
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PRODUCT
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SOFTWARE HOUSE
Sierra/Dynamix

PRICE
£44.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb Ram (600k Base Memory), 386, VGA

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib Sound Cards, Joystick, Flightstick, Flightstick Pro

PAGE 70

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE LAST SIERRA FLIGHT SIM, ACES OF THE PACIFIC, IT SEEMED ONLY RIGHT THAT THE AERIAL WAR BEING FOUGHT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POND SHOULD BE REPRESENTED. HENCE, ACES OVER EUROPE WAS BORN.

by Keith Sloan

ACES OVER EUROPE

Most of the time you'll be flying as part of a flight. This way, maximum damage can be inflicted on any enemy installations that you have been assigned. It also allows you to get into some serious dogfighting action with the knowledge that you'll have a wingman with you to watch your back

REVIEW

UNLIKE modern day air combat, fighter pilots in the Second World War had to rely on their wits and sheer flying skills to win an airborne battle. There was no radar, no guided A-A missiles and no chance for another go if you screwed things up. Don't get me wrong, I'm not taking anything away from the pilots that flew numerous sorties in the Gulf or any other recent military conflict, it's just that dogfights in a prop-driven aircraft with only a machine-gun or small bore cannon for company called for a completely different set of flying skills from the pilot.

World War II flying was much more akin to the 'seat of the pants' flying that the old barnstormers of the early aviation era exhibited. Every battle took

The P-51 is a very fast and agile fighter aircraft, and is ideally suited to both ground attack and air superiority. However, a problem arises when diving at a near vertical angle towards an enemy ship, because somewhere along the line you have to sacrifice safety for weapon accuracy. It's a tough job!

place within a much smaller airspace, and before you could even attempt to destroy your adversary you had to be able to see him – as opposed to modern air combat, where most encounters take place beyond visual range. Taking all this into account, it's surprising that a lot more flight and fight sims haven't decided to take WWII as their starting points and placed a heavy emphasis on dogfighting and air combat manoeuvres. Sierra's last flight sim, Aces of the Pacific, gave you the opportunity to engage in a good old-fashioned dogfight with the enemy, but because it was predominantly a simulation of American and Japanese aircraft from the period, it lacked something that all British aviation buffs adore – Spitfires.

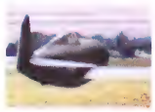
Well, all that has now been put right with the release of Aces Over Europe (AOE), which gives potential RAF wannabes the chance to engage German fighters and bombers with a variety of planes, including of course the aforementioned saviour of the Battle of Britain and a couple of new American fighters also thrown in for good measure.

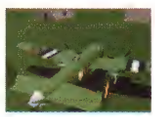
Anyone already familiar with the Great Warplanes series will feel instantly at home with AOE, due to Sierra having gone to great pains to ensure that the user-interface is consistent throughout its flight sims. The initial game screen contains all the usual choices, ranging from practice flights to vehicle viewing screens and a career option. This is one feature that sets Sierra games apart from the rest, and what with flight sims getting more complex and requiring an ever-growing array of options to be decided upon before even getting into the cockpit, it is comforting to have something that you feel familiar with greeting you when the game first boots up.

Flying a prop-driven aircraft on a mission, whether it be a ground strike requiring you to bomb a munitions factory or escort a bomber, is not easy. To this end, there is a plethora of single missions that can be attempted to give you a feeling of how things should be done in a plane that has no afterburning capabilities and nothing to help with your aim other than a dumb, iron sight. As always, it's important to make use of these, especially as they have no effect on your pilot rating.

"IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE WHEN DROPPING A BOMB ONTO AN ENEMY FRIGATE, THEN REST ASSURED THAT THE ESCORTING GUNBOATS WILL DO THEIR DAMNEDEST TO BRING BOTH YOU AND YOUR BIRD DOWN WITH AS BIG A SPLASH AS THEY CAN MUSTER"

In most singular missions found in other sims, the enemy has usually (but not always) been reduced to nothing more than a passive bystander, thus allowing the trainee pilot to reduce even the most heavily defended installation to a smouldering pile of rubble with little or no feel for how rough things are going to get when the honeymoon is over. AOE doesn't make things as easy as this. Missions are there to simulate the real conditions of battle, and because of this, enemy activity (whether it be Allied or German) is fully implemented. If you make a mistake when dropping a bomb onto an enemy frigate, then rest assured that the escorting gunboats will do their damnedest to bring both you and your bird down with as big a splash as they can muster.





As well as these, there are also training missions that give you the chance, without any enemy intervention, to practice such things as aerial gunnery, ground attack missions and what is perhaps the most important air manoeuvre of all, landing.

Although the single missions and practice options enable tactics to be worked out and practised, sooner or later you will want to choose a career and try to stay alive through as much of the war as you possibly can. AOE, as the name suggests, takes place in, or rather over, Europe any time between 1940 to 1945 – exactly when depends on what type of career you choose in the first instance.

Deciding whether to play an Allied or a German pilot will give you access to the relevant aeroplanes that the sides were fielding during WWII. For the aficionados among you, American pilots can fly the P-51, the P-38 or the P-47, with RAF flyers being accommodated in Typhoons, Tempests or Spitfires. Finally, the German pilot can choose between various incarnations of the BF-109, the FW-190 and the world's first operational jet fighter, the Me-262. ➤

PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

Train busting was the task set, and a P-47 was the plane that was put up to do the job. The P-47 was a very heavy, well-armoured plane and what it lacked in speed it more than made up for in sheer firepower and damage resilience. After using the autopilot feature to travel to the target, the train has become visible and the attack run is starting. The problem is knowing when to release the bomb, because without any form of aiming device it's a question of guess work

The trick in dropping bombs is to fly in to the target very low. This way, almost as soon as the target drops out of your line of sight due to your plane flying over the top of it, the bomb can be released with a fair chance of success. Of course, the downside to all this is that the blast radius from a 250lb bomb is far greater than the height that you are currently flying at, meaning that as soon as the load has been delivered you should increase your altitude by as much as possible

The results of the bombing effort can be seen here. Two of the train carriages have been destroyed, with a couple more derailed. Trains are considered 'soft' targets because of the distinct lack of defences that they support. Any pilot worth his salt should be able to hit an object that doesn't fire back, even if it does happen to be moving at over 60mph. That's all the mission planners required of the flight, so it's time to bug out and head for home

Another view of the carnage, this time seen from an aerial platform. As you can see, as soon as the bomb was dropped the P-47 increased altitude so as to be free from the effects of the bomb blast. A nice feature of the replay system is the ability to pan around any object that you are currently centred on with the use of the joystick. Simply keep the fire button depressed and use it in the same way as you would during the game, with left panning the camera around left and so on

Most flight sims nowadays have flight recorders incorporated into them, and Aces Over Europe is no exception. Although not as powerful as the recorder in Falcon 3.0, it is nevertheless a very user-friendly gadget that allows you to relive all your favourite dogfighting and bombing moments over and over again, from multiple viewpoints.

REVIEW

The aircraft depictions are, as I said in the review, excellent. Here, a P-38 Lightning goes through its paces, with the Gouraud shading and the light-sourced shading visible. It really does look stunning!

The airfields show a distinct lack of detail when compared to most other games of this genre. Most notable by its absence is the ATC tower which, if nothing else, should be included for the sake of accuracy

➤ From here, it's a case of carrying out assigned missions that will ultimately affect the outcome of the war. If, for instance, your flight has been assigned to carry out a ground support mission on the beaches of Normandy but this results in a failure, consequent missions will be affected by this pivotal point in the proceedings, making subsequent sorties all the more difficult.

Added to this is the importance of keeping your pilot alive. Getting shot up and having to bail out seems like a matter of course nowadays, what with the life support equipment available to the pilot and the complex ejection systems fitted to modern military aircraft, but in a World War II plane it is very dangerous. Ejecting from your stricken WWII aircraft doesn't always guarantee that you'll be any better off than if you had stayed with your faltering machine.

The strength of a lot of the latest flight sims relies on their ability to convey an accurate picture of the surrounding world to the computer pilot.

"AOE, WHILE MANAGING THE 'EXCELLENT-LOOKING AIRCRAFT' BIT, LACKS GROUND DETAIL TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT APPEARS THAT THE PROGRAMMERS HAVE JUST ADDED WHAT LITTLE DETAIL THERE IS AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT ON A FRIDAY AFTERNOON"

TFX, for example, stuns the player with complicated ground shading including structures and mountains, as well as some superbly depicted aircraft. AOE, while managing the 'excellent-looking aircraft' bit, lacks ground detail to such an extent that it appears that the programmers have just added what little detail there is as an afterthought on a Friday afternoon. There is very little of anything on the ground – Europe was never like this as far as I can remember from history lessons at school! The entire landscape in AOE is made up of bland colouring with the occasional city thrown in for good measure. Even the cities which are portrayed in a kind of chequered board on the ground are nothing to write home about, serving no other purpose than to emphasise how horrendous the ground is.

Perhaps the most difficult tasks are the bomber intercept missions that were undertaken to try and prevent the allies from turning industrial cities like Dresden into flattened ruins. Numerous B-17 bombers took to the skies in an attempt to force the German industrial machine to grind to a halt. Escorted by P-51s, these very heavily armoured air convoys presented real problems for the German pilots.

REVIEW

CUTTING THROUGH THE FLAK

One of the ways to ensure that the mission was a success was to pack the skies with as many of your side's planes as possible. In this instance, a FW-190 is seen supporting a couple of bombers on the way to the attack point. By coordinating attacks with multiple aircraft, the chances of knocking the bombers out of the sky, or even forcing them to abort their bomb run, was increased

This, believe it or not, is meant to represent one of the major cities of Germany. As you can see, it has not been very well portrayed, with only a group of blocks going to make up the intricate pattern that would indicate a city from the air. By scaling down the ground detail you would have expected the game to run at a fair pace, but unfortunately it is very slow, even on a fast 386

From the cockpit of the 190, the bomber formation is clearly visible in the distance. One of the safest ways to try and disable, or at least dissuade a bomber from completing its mission was to try and attack from the safest position, which in the case of the B-17 was from underneath the tail gunner. By doing this, the fighter didn't give the other gun positions any chance to get any shots off

The map screen gives you the nature of the mission to be undertaken by outlining the flight plan. Rendezvous points along that route and reconnaissance photographs (if any) that should make identifying the target that much easier are also shown

The aircraft, on the other hand, are absolutely gorgeous. Although mainly polygonal in structure, they are overlaid in Gouraud shading, with bit-mapped insignias and wing decor all adding to the effect. All the aircraft in AOE feature light sourced ray-traced graphics, meaning that the aircraft are shadowed and highlighted according to where the sun is in the sky, giving them a very 'real' look. However, if not for these superbly presented planes, AOE would look very ordinary indeed.

Right, so the graphics are a very mixed bag, but the important thing is to establish how well it actually plays. AOE plays, unfortunately, exactly how it looks. While it is not a bad game, the lack of clear and realistic graphics coupled with the repetitive nature of the gameplay tends to let the whole thing down somewhat. As sad as it might be, most flight simulations nowadays are merited on their presentation first and their flight models and playability second. As this is the case, AOE falls at the first hurdle.

Before seeing AOE, I would not really have believed that a flight sim could contain such a hotchpotch of graphics. OK, so it's a WWII air combat simulation, and the chances are that when dogfighting you would have neither the time nor the eyesight to pick out individual buildings and streets in cities below you, but a sim of this sort needs something to convey a feeling of height to the player, especially as it includes low-level strafing and bombing missions – flat, green landscapes are not really what the new breed of simulators are all about. Then when you look at AOE's aircraft in comparison to the best representatives of the flight sim genre, the whole thing starts to feel very unfinished.

The missions included in the package are also a little generic, and coupled with the fact that the game runs relatively slowly on a 386 (something that Aces over the Pacific (AOP) managed to overcome. Isn't this a backwards step?), it all gets rather lacklustre a little too quickly. The flight model appears to be very simplistic, with no attention being paid to weight distribution or other things such as temperature, that would affect the flight characteristics, even when the realism is set to high. The dogfights also lack that certain little 'something' that makes dogfighting so exciting.

"...TO STAND ANY KIND OF CHANCE IN THIS VERY SPECIALISED NICHE A GAME IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE EITHER VERY ORIGINAL OR VERY GOOD. AOE IS NEITHER"

It's a shame, because after seeing AOP, I expected a whole lot more from AOE. Things just haven't been taken far enough, and the two games are so similar as to be almost identical. If you've already got AOP, then think long and hard about whether the extra planes and the new scenarios of AOE are really worth investing in. With so many top-class flight sims around at the moment and a veritable truckload due for release over the next year, to stand any kind of chance in this very specialised niche a game is going to have to be either very original or very good. AOE is neither, it's an OK game – but only just. **SCORE ★★★**

EXPERT OPINION

Due to editorial deadlines we were unable to get an expert to comment on the realism factor of Aces Over Europe. To rectify this situation we will present an in-depth comparison between Aces Over Europe and Aces Over The Pacific written by Mark Hanna, a pilot with experience of many WWII aircraft, in issue three of PC Player.

PAGE 73

The Me-262 Komet was the world's first production jet. Capable of speeds of over 500mph, it was a formidable enemy. The only thing that let it down was the very unreliable powerplant

Attacking ships is a lot harder than it appears. What you can't see from this screen shot is the two gunboats located on the blind side of the freighter, waiting for me to overfly them so that they can let rip with everything that they've got

As the bomber formation gets closer, it's important to keep an eye out for any enemy escort fighters that could be in the area. B-17s never flew without a fighter escort, due to the fact that on one mission earlier on in the war, a squadron of 230 B-17s attempted to penetrate deep into German territory, resulting in 60 bombers being shot down with the loss of 600 crewmen. The FW-190 had proved its worth!

While discretion may be the better part of valour, complacency towards 70 tons of armed aircraft often results in a swift and sudden downward spiral. Although not manoeuvrable in the slightest, B-17s did pack an extremely big punch which often resulted in people on the ground witnessing something much akin to this scene here. They weren't called 'Flying Fortresses' for nothing

While the bomber crews were rejoicing at there being one less threat to think about, the unfortunate pilot had to worry about the unenviable job of bailing out of his stricken aircraft. Cockpits were extremely small, and even fitting a parachute into one was sometimes not possible. If the damage to the plane was only moderate, there may have been the chance of a 'dead stick' landing in a field, otherwise it was curtains

REVIEW

Spock's nerve pinch comes in extremely handy. One of the ways of escaping from the brig is by grabbing the guard by the neck, causing him to collapse to the ground unconscious. Later on, the guards walk closer to grab your weapons and yet again fall victim to Spock and his amazing nerve pinch

STAR TREK 2: JUDGMENT RITES

KIRK AND COMPANY

by

COME OUT OF

Alex

RETIREMENT TO BOLDLY

Simmons

CAPTAIN THE USS

ENTERPRISE.

PRODUCT
Star Trek 2: Judgment Rites

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Interplay

PRICE
£39.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb Ram, 33Mhz 386, VGA, 15Mb Hard Disk

SUPPORTS
Mouse (recommended), Soundblaster Sound Card

EXACTLY how do things gain a cult status? Star Trek could without a doubt be defined as a cult television show, with a following of Trekkies who will do virtually anything for Willy Shatner and his crew. I personally think it's perhaps a little extreme to dress up in 'authentic' Star Fleet uniforms to attend the annual Star Trek convention, but if it keeps them happy, who cares? Besides, Star Trek is so massively popular now that you cannot ignore it – with six motion pictures, three different television series that have been running for as long as many of us can remember and yet more to follow, it's now time for the sequel to Interplay's excellent point-and-click adventure, Star Trek: 25th Anniversary.

Judgment Rites is more of the same, only bigger. Still commanding Kirk, Spock and co, Judgment Rites is a cocktail of two parts graphic adventure mixed with a dash of space combat. Starting on the bridge of the Enterprise, Uhura is hailed by a ship in distress – the Alexander, one of Star Fleet's own. The captain appears on screen, his face encrusted with blood, warning Kirk and his crew that Star Fleet will be destroyed within eight days. Seconds later the Alexander explodes.

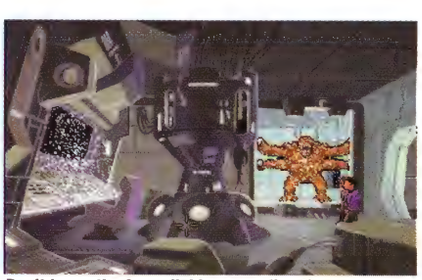
"...WITH SIX MOTION PICTURES, THREE DIFFERENT TELEVISION SERIES AND MORE TO FOLLOW, IT'S NOW TIME FOR THE SEQUEL TO INTERPLAY'S EXCELLENT POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE, STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY"

What now? Spock, as always, knows what to do. Before the Alexander was destroyed, Spock tapped into its navigation computer and downloaded the co-ordinates of its destination. Giving Chekov these co-ordinates and cross-referencing with the star map in the manual, Kirk can warp to light speed and arrive at the first port of call, the orbiting Espoir station.

In a sort of Wrath of Kahn-type plot, one of Kirk's old acquaintances is using a converted tractor beam to rip apart

REVIEW

Watch out for the guards! Their phasers are only set to stun, but as soon as Kirk is shot the game ends. Thankfully they aim for Spock and Bones first, giving Kirk a chance to run away



Don't lower the force field surrounding the cage containing a mutated flesh-eating human hater – it's got four clawed paws, massive fangs and its name suggests that it doesn't really like blokes that much!

the Enterprise, giving Kirk no other choice but to surrender in order to save the lives of his crew and the ship. Spock and Bones McCoy are transported down to Espoir along with Kirk, joining the unfortunate captain in the brig where he's been thrown by one of the giant Valaine guards.

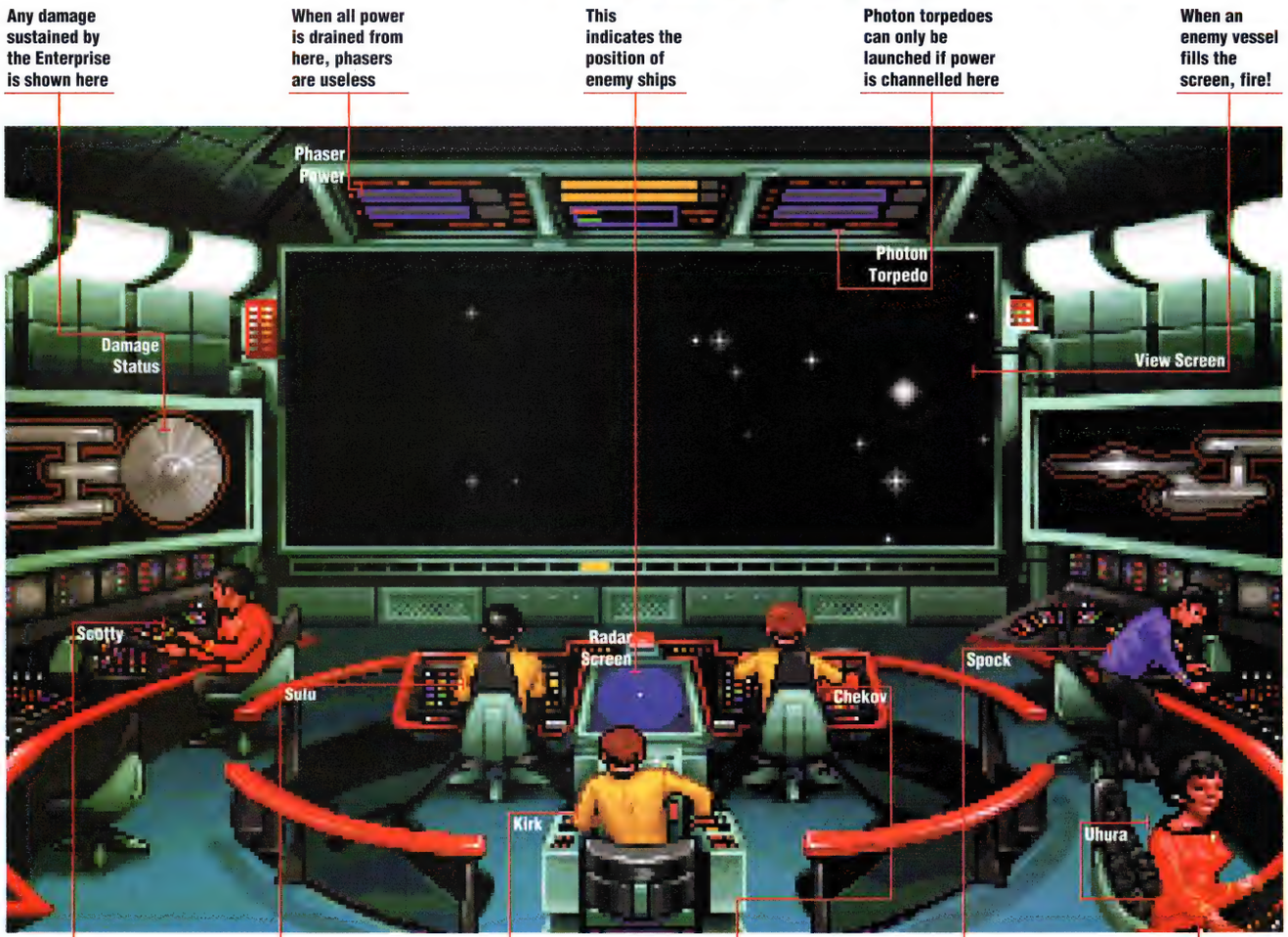
Through a series of icons, Kirk can look, talk, use or pick up an object. He can also give orders to Spock or McCoy by simply clicking on the use icon, then on the character, followed by the object you want to interact with. For instance, you can get Spock to operate a computer or get Bones to use his medi-kit to patch up one of the crew members.

Unfortunately, all three of them are stuck behind a force field at the moment, with all their belongings locked up outside with the guard, but Kirk, silver-tongued charmer that he is, can talk his way out of many situations in the game. The talk icon, a mouth which chats silently to itself, can be clicked on any of the characters present. McCoy and Spock will offer advice on the current situation, while Kirk has a number of different dialogue boxes to choose from, each one tackling the conversation from a different approach. It's no good threatening the guard – foul up and it may be worth saving until Kirk can talk his way out of the brig and grab his phaser, the two tricorders and the communicator.

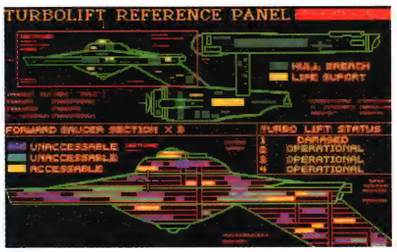
The phaser has two settings – kill and stun. However Star Fleet does not endorse murder without reason, so it's worthwhile just using the stun setting for now. The tricorders, one of which belongs to Spock and the other to McCoy, allow you to tap into computer systems and hopefully gain valuable information, such as passcodes. The tricorder in the hands of Bones can analyse a patient in order to tell the doctor exactly what the problem is, so he can then use the medi-kit to cure them.

Although there are only three of them, Kirk, Spock and McCoy can quickly and easily overpower the guards using their wit, intelligence and of course their phasers. Then Brendell can be confronted and his scheme to attack Star Fleet foiled. How? That would be telling, but before long Kirk is back on the bridge of the Enterprise with a new mission to accomplish. This is the beauty of Judgment Rites – there are loads of missions to complete. Nearer the end more crew members (including Chekov, Sulu, Uhura and Scotty) will beam down with you, while all will be at your side during space combat. ➤

KLINGONS ON THE STARBOARD BOW


Any damage sustained by the Enterprise is shown here
When all power is drained from here, phasers are useless
This indicates the position of enemy ships
Photon torpedoes can only be launched if power is channelled here
When an enemy vessel fills the screen, fire!
Phaser Power
Photon Torpedo
Damage Status
View Screen
Scotty
Radar Screen
Spock
Sulu
Chekov
Kirk
Uhura
Scotty can repair damage and kick-in emergency power
Lieutenant Sulu is the ship's helmsman, controlling impulse power and shields
Kirk is the captain and dishes out the orders. He also chooses who travels in the teleporter
Chekov is the weapons officer and also handles the ship's navigation
Spock gives Kirk valuable advice and also analyses enemy ships with the computer
To talk with Star Fleet and other vessels, use communications officer Uhura

REVIEW



KOBAYASHI MARU

Although ship combat is featured very little, it is vital to learn how to deal with enemy ships. Arming weapons and raising shields is the first step to success, followed by locating the enemy on the radar which appears in front of Kirk. The Enterprise is armed with phasers and photon torpedoes, the latter being more powerful but taking longer to recharge. More often than not the Enterprise will be damaged during battle, although Scotty can attempt to repair any of the damaged systems while the fight ensues. Be warned, the Enterprise is an old ship and can't take that much damage – too many torpedoes can rupture the hull, sucking the crew out into space and inevitably their demise. Hopefully you saved before you went into battle. If not...oops!

"THANKFULLY JUDGMENT RITES ISN'T ONE OF THOSE GAMES THAT RELIES TOO MUCH ON TRIAL AND ERROR. MOST OF THE PUZZLES ARE FAIRLY LOGICAL AND CAN BE WORKED OUT JUST BY USING A BIT OF BRAIN POWER"

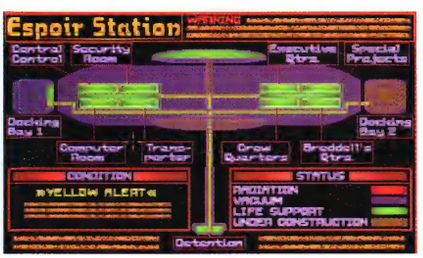
Thankfully Judgment Rites isn't one of those games that relies too much on trial and error. Most of the puzzles are fairly logical and can be worked out just by using a bit of brain power. The game can be progressed through at a reasonable rate, without having to constantly phone up hint-lines or glance at the tip book. The icon system is OK, although I did find it a bit slow and long-winded at times. Having to click back and forth to use all the characters can often be a pain in the rear, even when you're using the hot-key short cuts. However, if you've played the first game you'll have no problems here.

Graphically, Judgment Rites is pretty good, using caricatures of the Star Trek casts which are all nicely animated. The sprites are chunky when they get close to the screen, but the animation is generally good, despite being prone to slowing down a little when the screen is cluttered. As for the backgrounds, while being colourful and bold they're not particularly outstanding, although I suppose they do fit in with the graphical style (which is virtually unchanged from the original).

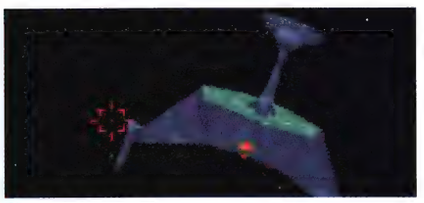
While on the subject of presentation, various sound effects have been borrowed from the TV series, such as the doors making a 'Psst' noise when they slide open. There are no faults in this department, and even the rendition of the theme tune is passable. On the whole, Judgment Rites is basically an extension of the first game with new missions. It's not too easy, including quite a few tasks to tackle thus ensuring longevity. Star Trek: Judgment Rites is an excellent adventure which will appeal to any fans of the genre, not just Trekkies.

SCORE ★★★★

The commander of the Espoir station, James Munroe, is under the control of Brendell. Brendell is the power-crazy scientist hoping to destroy Star Fleet in the next eight days



REVIEW



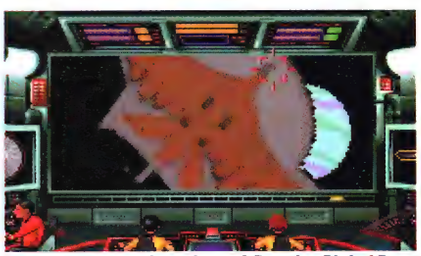
KLINGON D-7

Aha, a little mistake I've found! The Klingon D-7 Bringer of Destruction never had a cloaking device in the series, but it's got one in Judgment Rites. Like all Klingons, the D-7 ship is a formidable opponent

ROMULAN BIRD OF PREY

The Romulan Bird of Prey is also equipped with a cloaking device which hides it from your scanner and makes it impossible to see. It is armed with a plasma-beam weapon which easily rips through the Enterprise's hull

As soon as the shields drop, the Enterprise is in trouble. I've warned you about the vicious Klingon Commanders – not satisfied with crippling your ship, they'll finish you off with a couple of photon torpedoes



Phew, that was a close shave. A Romulan Bird of Prey flies past the Enterprise, narrowly avoiding a deadly collision. Rip open its underbelly with a pair of well-aimed torpedoes

The crackle at the top of the view screen indicates that sensors are failing. Get Scotty on the case and tell him to repair them quickly!

CD-ROM EXPLAINED

WHAT IS CD-ROM?

CD-ROM is a storage technology for large amounts of information, which can be accessed from a PC via a CD-ROM drive. CD-ROM technology uses Compact Discs (CDs) as its information storage medium. These disks can store high resolution colour images, millions of words, full audio sound tracks and much, much more.

THE CD-ROM ADVANTAGE

There are numerous advantages in having a CD-ROM drive. CDs can hold the equivalent of up to 600 floppy disks and software developers can design more sophisticated and complex programs to take advantage of this large storage capacity. Cheap production costs, compact design and the practically indestructible nature of CDs also makes them ideal for software storage.

KODAK PHOTOCD COMPATIBLE

Kodak have recently introduced a new technology called Kodak PhotoCD. This allows normal photographs from a camera to be stored on CD discs, which can then be viewed on your PC. Photographs can be enhanced or manipulated using KODAK ACCESS or GRAPHICS WORKS software, to give you the results you need for your business presentations or the "family album".

MULTI-SESSION COMPATIBLE

Some applications require that the information written to a CD-ROM is updated on more than one occasion. This involves several or 'multi' sessions of writing to the disc. All four CD-ROM drives featured are multi-session compatible, which means that they can read all of the information which has been written to a CD in this way. Inferior, single-session drives can only read what was originally written on the first session, not the information added on subsequent sessions. Applications such as Kodak's PhotoCD, which can update CDs with additional photographs, require a multi-session drive to read all the information which may be stored on the disc.

MULTIMEDIA (MPC) COMPATIBLE

The Mitsumi, Panasonic and Sony CD-ROM drives are ready for all types of multimedia applications. They are fully compliant with the Multimedia PC (MPC) standard, full compatibility with existing and future multimedia programs.

REELMAGIC COMPATIBLE

All four CD-ROM drives featured here are fully compatible with ReelMagic, making them ideal drives from which to run the next generation of future software that ReelMagic makes possible.

DOUBLE SPEED TRANSFER

Double Speed Transfer indicates that a drive is able to stream data from the CD-ROM drive to the computer up to twice as fast as a single speed CD-ROM drive. The most obvious benefit of dual speed can be seen when viewing AVI or Quicktime movies from CD-ROM. MPC Applications that need high speed transfer of graphics and audio data, such as the latest photo-realistic games, will also benefit from the increased data transfer rate of double speed drives.

DO I NEED AN INTERFACE CARD?

The four CD-ROM drives shown on this page do not require an additional interface card when used with a PC sound card, eg the Sound Galaxy range, which includes an appropriate Mitsumi/Panasonic/Sony interface. The Mitsumi CD-ROM drive includes a 16-bit AT interface card as standard. The Sony CDU-31A-02 drive comes with a Mediavision 16-bit stereo sound card and therefore, does not require an additional interface. The Panasonic and Sony CDU-31A-03 drives do not include interface cards and would therefore need to be used with an appropriate sound card, eg the Sound Galaxy range (Sony drive has a Sony/Mitsumi adaptor), or an interface card, both of which are available from Silica. AT interface card for Panasonic or Sony CD-ROM Drives - CDR 4072 £19.95+VAT.

EASY TO INSTALL AND USE

All the drives are easy to install. Just slide them into a spare 5.25" drive bay in your PC*. They do not require disc caddies and disc loading is via a manual slide mechanism on the Mitsumi drive and a motorised tray loading mechanism on the Panasonic and Sony drives.

***NOTE:** Some drives may require slide rails - check your PC drive bay.

MITSUMI Panasonic SONY

CD-ROM DRIVES

Model shown - Panasonic CR562B CD-ROM Drive

Silica are pleased to present four top quality CD-ROM drives from world leading manufacturers, Mitsumi, Panasonic and Sony. The Sony CDU-31A-02 comes with a Mediavision 16-bit Stereo Sound Card, worth £99+VAT, included for an amazing low price of £149+VAT! Silica also include a free CD with every CD-ROM drive. The Anecdote CD compilation from Nimbus features Databases and Books, plus Utilities, Education, Video and Animation Software.

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INTERFACE OPTIONS

The Mitsumi CD-ROM drive includes an AT interface. The Sony CDU-31A-02 drive includes a 16-bit sound card and therefore does not require an additional interface. Both the Panasonic and Sony (includes Sony/Mitsumi adaptor) CDU-31A-03 drives require an interface. They can be used with sound cards which have Panasonic/Mitsumi/Sony interfaces eg the Sound Galaxy range, or an AT interface card, both of which are available from Silica. AT Interface card for Panasonic and Sony CD-ROM Drives - CDR 4072 £19.95 inc VAT

	MITSUMI LU005S CD-ROM (PC MAGAZINE UK CHOICE DEC '93)	SONY (CDU-31A-02) CD-ROM DRIVE + 16-BIT STEREO SOUND CARD	PANASONIC CR562B CD-ROM DRIVE	SONY CDU-31A-03 CD-ROM DRIVE
PLAYS AUDIO CD'S	✔	✔	✔	✔
ACCESS TIME (MS)	350	460	320	460
DATA TRANSFER (KB/S) - SINGLE/DUAL SPEED	150	150	150/300	150/300
MPC COMPATIBLE	✔	✔	✔	✔
KODAK PHOTOCD COMPATIBLE	✔	✔	✔	✔
REELMAGIC COMPATIBLE	✔	✔	✔	✔
CACHE MEMORY	32K	64K	64K	64K
MULTI-SESSION	✔	✔	✔	✔
5.25" INTERNAL DRIVE MOUNTING*	✔	✔	✔	✔
RCA STYLE HEADPHONE CONNECTOR	✔	✔	✔	✔
MOTORISED TRAY LOADING MECHANISM	–	SOFT-EJECT	✔	SOFT-EJECT
INTERFACE/SOUND CARD INCLUDED	AT Interface	16-BIT STEREO SOUND CARD	–	SONY TO MITSUMI ADAPTOR
WARRANTY PERIOD	2 YEARS	1 YEAR	1 YEAR	1 YEAR
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*NOTE: Some drivers may require slide rails - check your PC drive bay.

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SOFTWARE FEATURES COMPARISON	KODAK ACCESS	GRAPHICS WORKS
DIRECT PHOTO CD IMPORT	✓	✓
RESIZE OR CROP IMAGES	✓	✓
FLIP AND ROTATE IMAGES	✓	✓
EXPORT TO: BMP, TIFF, JPEG FORMATS	✓	✓
IMPORT FROM OTHER APPLICATIONS	–	✓
SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS: BLUR, EMBOSS ETC	–	✓
TEXT HANDLING	–	✓
BITMAP DRAWING TOOLS	–	✓
VECTOR DRAWING TOOLS	–	✓
LOGO CREATION	–	✓
PAINTING TOOLS - BRUSH ETC.	–	✓
ALSO SUPPLIED:		
PRESENTATION PACKAGE INCLUDED	–	✓
WIPE AND FADE BETWEEN IMAGES	–	✓
WINDOWS DRAW PACKAGE INCLUDED	–	✓
VECTOR BASED DRAWING	–	✓
PICTURE IMAGE LIBRARY	24	1000
CLIPART LIBRARY - OVER 10,000 IMAGES	–	✓

KODAK ACCESS

The Kodak Access application is Kodak's official PhotoCD software title. With it you can select, view and manipulate photographs which have been stored using Kodak's PhotoCD technology.

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SAM & MAX
FREELANCE POLICE
TM & © 1992 by STEVE PURCELL
LETTERED BY L. LOIS BUHALIS
COME ON, MAX. NOW THAT WE'VE PUMMELED THE OUTPOST OF THE UNSAVORY EMPIRE, WE CAN TAKE A SWING AT THE DEATH SPHERE!
I DON'T THINK I CAN FIT IN THERE WITH YOU, SAM.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE RIDING UP TOP, LITTLE PAL! YOU'LL BE MY EYES, EARS AND ROLL BAR IN THE HEAT OF COMBAT.
I WANT TO GO HOME AND WATCH TV, SAM.
DEATH FROM ABOVE
SEEP! BOOP!
THIS IS SCIENCE FICTION, MAX. TELEVISION HAS BEEN REPLACED BY SMELLOGRAPHIC DIGITAL HOLOGRAPHY. AND STILL THERE'S NOTHING WORTH WATCHING, EXCEPT "RAWHIDE", OF COURSE.
SAM, IT'S COLD OUT HERE. AND I'M HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING.
YOU'RE A REAL PEST TODAY, MAX.
BLUE LEADER! I'M GOING IN ON MY OWN! DON'T TRY TO STOP ME!
HAVE AT IT, BIG SHOT.
ZOOM ZOOT
HEY!
SAM, I'M READY TO COME IN NOW!
MY HEAD'S CAUGHT FIRE, SAM! NOW WHAT?
WHAT A STROKE OF BRILLIANCE, MAX! YOUR SMOKESCREEN WILL CONCEAL US FROM THE ENEMY!
YAAAAGH!
BOINK
SMOKIE SAYS PLEASE DO NOT DEPART FLAMING OBJECTS IN THIS DEATH SPHERE!
GOOD THING THEY LEFT US A BIG HOLE TO SHOOT MISSILES INTO. OTHERWISE THIS COULD TAKE ALL DAY.
FOOMP
YEE HAWWWW
I THINK I SAW THIS IN A MOVIE ABOUT A MILLION TIMES.
QUIT SCRATCHING YOUR SCAR TISSUE, MAX. YOU'RE MAKING ME SICK.
I'M JUST A LITTLE ANXIOUS, SAM. DO YOU THINK I'LL EVER HAVE A POMPADOUR AGAIN?
OBOY! MAYBE I CAN FASHION A GRUESOME HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE FROM THE LEFTOVERS.
SURE, MAX. IT'S SCIENCE FICTION! YOUR ATTRACTIVE CROP OF HAIR PLUGS IS BEING CLONED BY SKILLED TECHNICIANS EVEN AS WE SPEAK.
YOU CRACK ME UP, LITTLE PAL.

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

REVIEW

PRODUCT
Sam & Max: Hit the Road

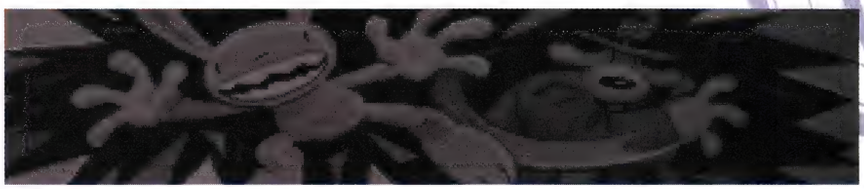
SOFTWARE HOUSE
US Gold/LucasArts

PRICE
£39.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 3.1 Min, 2Mb Ram, 386, VGA, Mouse, 12Mb Hard Disk

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland, General MIDI (with MPU-401) Sound Cards, Windows

This is no time to get sloppy – there's something peculiar about this place and we've got to find out what it is



SAM and Max is one of those games that an awful lot of people have been looking forward to. With Day of the Tentacle already established as one of the best games of all time (it performed monstrously well in our Super Test this month – see page 16) it came as quite a surprise to learn that LucasArts would be ready to launch its next product in time for Christmas. Sam and Max has been on the cards for some time and has been attracting quite a substantial amount of attention. Why? For two reasons really – the first and most obvious is that it's the new LucasArts game, the second is that it employs a totally new version of the SCUMM (Story Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) control system.

Games such as DOTT, Indy: Fate of Atlantis and Monkey Island all employed fairly advanced versions of the original system, but it's not until now that the whole thing has really undergone a complete overhaul.

The new system allows for full screen graphics as opposed to the two-thirds screen window found in the previous titles – and we now get something which at first sight seems very much like the Sierra control system. All interaction is by means of a cyclical cursor that flicks through move, use, talk and so on at the click of a right-hand mouse button. Fortunately (unlike the Sierra system) the icon is still 'smart' and will let you know when an object, or a location on screen can be interacted with. The overall result is an extremely speedy and intuitive control method which is by far the best yet seen in an adventure.

Based on a 'cult cartoon strip' Sam & Max Freelance Police, drawn by game designer Steve Purcell, the game follows the escapades of Sam – a canine Sam Spade and his completely nutty and psychopathic sidekick rabbit chum, Max. Working as freelance detectives, the daring duo are called upon to unravel the case of the disappearance of Bruno the bigfoot and Trixie the giraffe-necked woman from the local carnival.

The ensuing adventure takes them through a plethora of unusual locations ranging from the World's Largest Ball of Twine to the Celebrity Vegetable Museum and even the Mount Rushmore Prehistoric Bungee Cavalcade and Tar Pit Slide. No bastion of culture or historical importance is safe from the scathing wit of the crime-busting team and the end result is something which is by far the most amusing LucasArts game yet. Yes, even funnier than Day of the Tentacle or Monkey Island 2.

The graphical style of the game is very similar to DOTT – the superbly drawn, cartoon-style graphics are absolutely exquisite throughout every location. Characters are amusingly portrayed (even DOTT's Bernard makes an appearance under a different guise) but the absolute stars of the show are really the two central characters...

Sam is a huge lolloping hound in baggy slacks, jacket and trilby who is effectively the straight-man(ish) of the pair. His investigative skills are wacky and unusual while his scathing, dry remarks will have you rolling about pretty much every time he interrogates a witness.

Max on the other hand is a completely different case. Being a fluffy little white rabbit, he's cute...and he knows it. With a penchant for extreme violence and unruly behaviour many of his actions and comments are not only unexpected, they are also some of the high points of the game. The interaction between the two characters is superb and while superficially simply amusing, there are a number of hints to be gleaned from the duo's banter.

Unlike DOTT, control basically only covers one of the characters – Sam. In many instances Max simply tags along behind you causing mischief and making sarcastic comments, however there are a number of occasions where you will actually have to use Max to achieve a certain goal. That extra pair of fluffy little hands can certainly make a difference. In fact, this 'use' of a character is another example of the new and improved SCUMM system. Max is effectively treated as another part of your inventory, and you can try to use him with just about any object you find.

Generally, object manipulation is very good throughout, and there are a number of puzzles which require objects to be joined together to help create productive tools. Thankfully there is nothing too obscure to have to think of at any point, unlike many other adventures I could name. Take a look at this month's Super Test for some examples of obscurity.

As with all previous LucasArts adventures Sam & Max manages to be as user-friendly as possible. You can't die, you can't do anything wrong, every object has a purpose and the intricate puzzles can be solved in pretty much any order you like. The game is far from linear and it's possible to attack the game from any angle you like. In fact, two of us were playing it in the office and on many occasions we were tackling the same puzzles despite having completed totally different parts of the game.

It's also worth noting here that each time you start playing Sam & Max from scratch some of the puzzles change slightly. Admittedly it's nothing drastic, but you'll find that certain doors have different things behind them, and the location of characters will be altered. This is a definite cure for the 'adventure completion blues' – if you manage to finish the game, you can go back and do things again without it all being ruined for you.

"NO BASTION OF CULTURE OR HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE IS SAFE FROM THE SCATHING WIT OF THE CRIME-BUSTING TEAM AND THE END RESULT IS SOMETHING WHICH IS BY FAR THE MOST AMUSING LUCASARTS GAME YET. YES, EVEN FUNNIER THAN DAY OF THE TENTACLE OR MONKEY ISLAND 2"

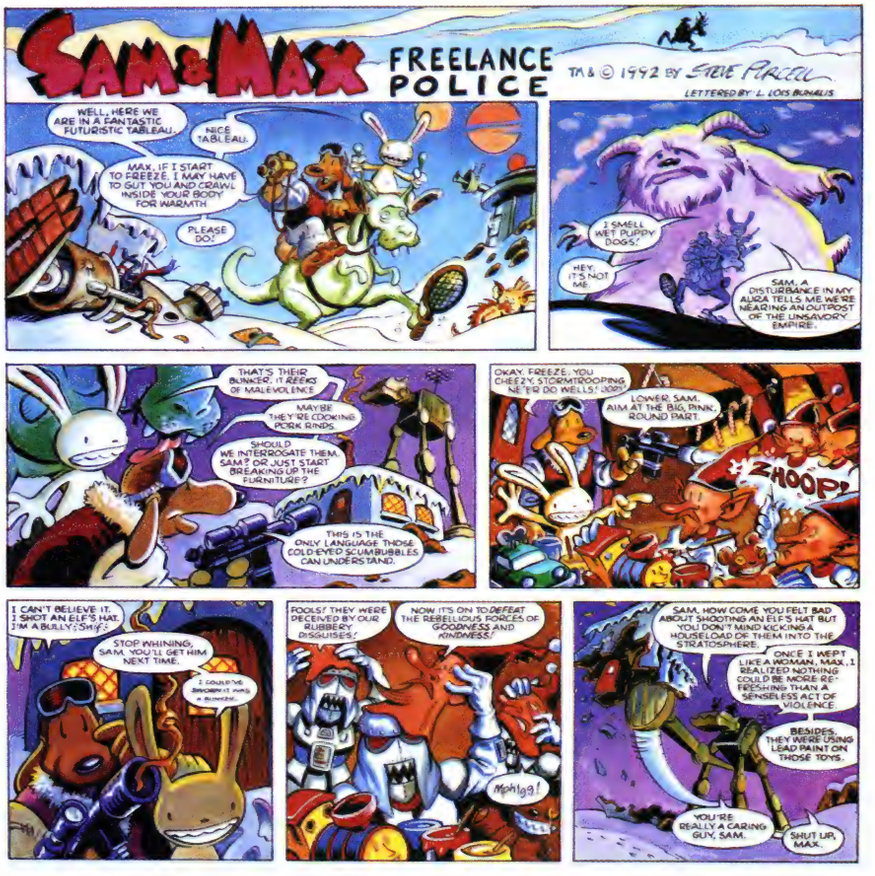
Sam and Max – Freelance Police; doers of good, righters of wrongs and busters of punks

The hall of freaks is where the adventure begins. Finding both Trixie and Bruno the bigfoot is your prime objective

The mad professor takes a hostage during the introduction sequence. Will Sam and Max come to the rescue or will they arrive after milk and biscuits?

REVIEW

Sam & Max is one of those games that is unpredictable and fun, but it is also quite cruel to animals. Oh well, you can't have everything

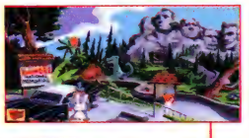

SAM&MAX FREELANCE POLICE
TM & © 1992 BY STEVE PURCELL
LETTERED BY L. LOIS BUNALIS
WELL, HERE WE ARE IN A FANTASTIC FUTURISTIC TABLEAU.
NICE TABLEAU.
MAX, IF I START TO FREEZE, I MAY HAVE TO SUIT YOU AND CRAWL INSIDE YOUR BODY FOR WARMTH
PLEASE DO!
I SMELL WET PUPPY DOGS!
HEY, IT'S NOT ME
SAM, A DISTURBANCE IN MY AURA TELLS ME WE'RE NEARING AN OUTPOST OF THE UNSAVORY EMPIRE.
THAT'S THEIR BUNKER. IT REEKS OF MALEVOLENCE
MAYBE THEY'RE COOKING PORK RINDS.
SHOULD WE INTERROGATE THEM, SAM? OR JUST START BREAKING UP THE FURNITURE?
THIS IS THE ONLY LANGUAGE THOSE COLD-EYED SCUMBUBBLES CAN UNDERSTAND.
OKAY, FREEZE. YOU CHEEZY STORMTROOPING NE'ER DO WELLS! 300?
LOWER, SAM. AIM AT THE BIG, PINK, ROUND PART.
ZHOOP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I SHOT AN ELF'S HAT. I'M A BULLY! SHIT!
STOP WHINING, SAM. YOU'LL GET HIM NEXT TIME.
I SHOULD'VE SHOOTEN IT WITH A SHOTGUN.
FOOLS! THEY WERE DECEIVED BY OUR RUBBERY DISGUISES!
NOW IT'S ON TO DEFEAT THE REBELLIOUS FORCES OF GOODNESS AND KINDNESS!
Mphlgg!
SAM, HOW COME YOU FELT BAD ABOUT SHOOTING AN ELF'S HAT BUT YOU DON'T MIND KICKING A HOUSELOAD OF THEM INTO THE STRATOSPHERE.
ONCE I WEPT LIKE A WOMAN, MAX. I REALIZED NOTHING COULD BE MORE REFRESHING THAN A SENSELESS ACT OF VIOLENCE
BESIDES, THEY WERE USING LEAD PAINT ON THOSE TOYS.
YOU'RE REALLY A CARING GUY, SAM.
SHUT UP, MAX.

THE SAM AND MAX SIGHTSEEING TOUR OF THE USA

These locations all pop up at different stages of the game as you work out certain clues. As you near the end of the game you have full access to every area

Things act strangely at the Mystery Vortex – no wonder your eyes are beginning to hurt!

A Jurassic Park and a remodelled Mount Rushmore are the star attractions here



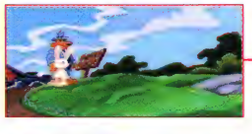
This, the Largest Ball of Twine in the World, has a rotating restaurant bolted onto its summit!

If you've got the munchies, then call in at Snuckey's where you'll get service with a smile

The fairground will be one of your first stops. Allowing Max the free run of the rides would be nothing short of suicidal

Fairground

Frog Rock has got weird interplanetary powers, and with the right kind of persuasion could attract even the most distant of visitors



When all else fails, you could always end up back at your office. A game of darts may wile away the hours

The Savage Jungle Inn is where an invitation-only sasquatch party is being held. The trouble is, you can't get into it

Sam & Max: Hit the Road does have one slight hiccup – the Car Surfing game. It's a good job that it's only a bonus game

Now I've seen it all. This here is a Celebrity Vegetable Museum. Can you see Alfred Hitchcock, bottom-left?

The World of Fish – for all your fish needs, and more! What a great place to spend a holiday

Conroy Bumpus lives in a really big house near Atlanta (at a guess). He's filthy rich and isn't a nice man

Wow! It's the Gator Golf Park! Mind you don't lose a leg as you line up that crucial shot and don't go near the rough

REVIEW

SAM & MAX
FREELANCE POLICE
IN: "SAM & MAX MEET SOME FRIGHTENING PIRATES"
TM & © 1990 - STEVE PURCELL
LETTERED BY: LOIS BUHALIS
IT WAS THE COMMISSIONER, SAM. I MEAN MAX HE SAID THERE'S BAD TROUBLE IN THE 17TH CENTURY!
SOME KIND OF PIRATEY NONSENSE.
LET'S MOVE... UHKH!
YES... YES... YES? SWEET MOTHER OF MERCY IN A TOBOGGAN... WE'RE ON OUR WAY!
WELL HERE WE ARE IN THE CARIBBEAN. ITS RICHLY TEXTURED WITH ROMANTIC PERIOD CHARM.
HELLO LITTLE MONKEYS! THEY'RE JUST LIKE RATS WITH PREHENSILE TAILS. NEAT!
SSHH. I SMELL THE FETID PRESENCE OF DEED-DOERS, MAX.
THE WHAT?
WE'LL BE BURYIN' SLIPPERY JACK ALIVE AND THEN ARRR TREASURE WILL BE PROTECTED FROM UNWASHED MISCREANTS LIKE US.
SOUND FAIR. I GUESS.
OKAY. BREAK IT UP! WHAT THE HECK'S GOING ON HERE?
OOH. THAT'S TELLING HIM.
THIS ISN'T NICE AND I'M PRETTY SURE IT'S AGAINST THE LAW.
WE'RE PIRATES AND WE'RE REALLY CRANKY. THAT'S OUR JOB.
YEAH. SO HOSE OFF, DOG LIPS.
OOPS.
OH-OH.
MAX! MAX! WAKE UP, LITTLE BUDDY.
OH... THERE CERTAINLY IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME. IS IT REALLY A DREAM, SAM?
WELL... NO.
EVERYTHING WILL BE JUST FINE, WON'T YOU THINK?

Younger players will probably love the animation, but much of the humour will unfortunately zip over their heads

ADULT HUMOUR ALERT?

➤ One of the real strong points of the game is the high humour content. Steve Purcell, who is providing creative direction and art describes the product as having "a real edge to it that adults will appreciate. Kids will like the cartoony look and wild terrain of Sam and Max, and adults will get into the more subtle verbal and situational humour. The game will appeal to audiences who enjoy programmes like The Simpsons". In many ways he is right. Much as you have to take a designer's comment with a pinch of salt – for once someone has actually managed to hit the nail on the head. At a superficial level, Sam and Max are just a pair of daft characters – they're a bit goofy and slightly dim and they keep you happy with silly little actions and idiotic comments. However, the deeper you get into the game, the wackier stuff becomes apparent. Just look at the locations for a start – Celebrity Vegetable Museum and Mount Rushmore Prehistoric Bungee Cavalcade and Tar Pit Slide. There are some deranged minds at work here.

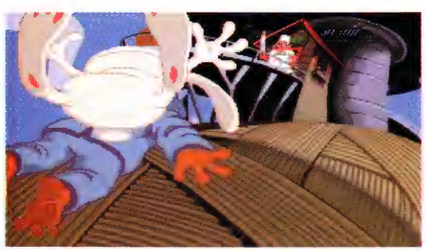
Many of the puzzles also rely on some pretty amusing situations. Particularly worthy of note is the Virtual Reality machine in Conroy Bumpus' mansion (a maniacal country singer who collects monsters). Donning the helmet transports Sam into a sword and sorcery world of naff-looking polygons and dodgy animation. It's great stuff and the interaction between both Sam and Max at this stage is absolutely hilarious – Max becomes a peripheral for the game but I'll say no more!

One of the few things Day of the Tentacle received flack for was its localised humour. Many reviewers and punters found its US college humour a little over their heads, and as a result many of the subtleties were lost on some people – personally, I had no problems with the dry wit of Bernard and co. You'll find that Sam and Max provides a generic and broad based level of wit – admittedly, much is still very American, but unless you've lead a very sheltered life, there is little (if any) which evokes the "uh?" response after an apparently witty set-piece.

"IT'S ALSO WORTH WATCHING OUT FOR THE LUCASFILM MICKEY-TAKES WHICH CROP UP...PRINCESS LEIA APPEARING FROM A MAINTENANCE DROID AND PLEADING "HELP ME SAM AND MAX, YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE" AND SAM STEALING SOMETHING FROM A PEDESTAL IN TRUE INDIANA JONES STYLE ARE PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY"

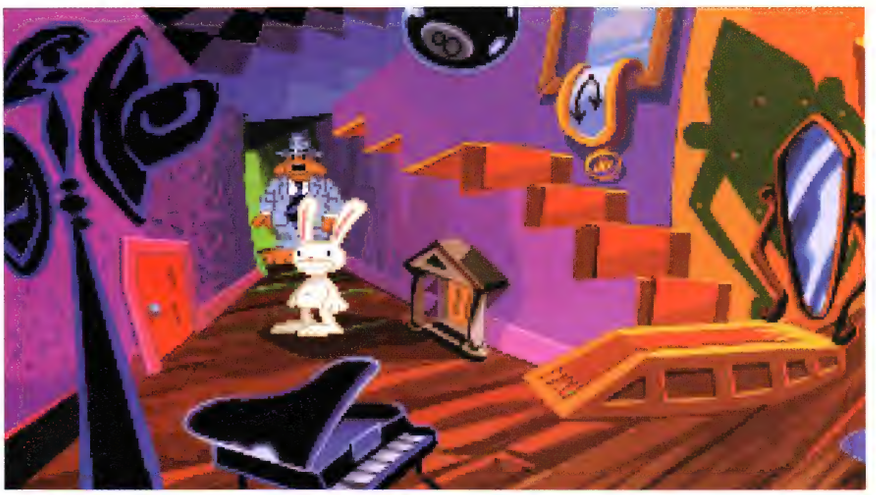
The parodies that crop up throughout are all fairly obvious... Conroy is a dead ringer for Elvis and many of the locations are simply taking the mickey out of modern life – the VR machine, the bungee jumping, there's even a 'Dali-esque' location complete with melting clocks and general weirdness.

It's also worth watching out for the LucasFilm mickey-takes which crop up...Princess Leia appearing from a maintenance droid and pleading "Help me Sam and Max, you're my only hope" and Sam stealing something from a pedestal in true Indiana Jones style are particularly noteworthy. ➤



The animated scaling of this airlifted fish has to be seen to be believed – it's perfectly smooth and very realistic

REVIEW



Escher, eat your heart out. Dali, eat your heart out. Jimmy Saville, eat your heart out. Who on earth let that pig into this booth?!

Just one example of the stunning cut-sequences running throughout the game. There's no denying that Sam & Max is a visual treat par excellence

➤ After playing Day of the Tentacle I was in serious doubt as to whether LucasArts could ever actually produce something better. I was obviously quite wrong. There is very little which you can actually criticise about Sam & Max – if there are any niggles they are really, really minor ones, such as the fact that it starts to get a bit annoying when Max insists on wanting to go to the toilet ("I want twinklies!") every time you visit one of the Snuckey's soda bars. It's not a particularly major gripe, but it just gets a bit, you know, tedious.

One, or indeed five things I haven't mentioned yet are the little sub-games that have been included. We're informed that the LucasArts team has been tinkering around with these little games for some time, but never actually got around to including them as part of anything. Well, now we have them in all their daft glory: Wak-A-Rat – hit the rats with a big hammer, Car Bomb – a variation on Battleships (apparently changed for licensing reasons...at least that's what Max says), Dress-Up – a variation on the copy protection system where you dress a naked Sam or Max using a bizarre selection of pre-drawn clothes, Colouring Book – exactly what it says...dig out the Crayolas, and finally the Car Surfing...which is exactly that.

Three of the games can actually be purchased from the game's three shops (the aforementioned Snuckey's soda bars) while Wak-A-Rat appears at the carnival and the Car Surfing is actually a location on the game map. None of the games are vital to completing the adventure, they are simply diversions and what welcome diversions they are too.

"AFTER SPENDING A GREAT DEAL OF TIME WITH THE GAME, I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT IT IS PROBABLY THE BEST POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE I'VE EVER PLAYED"

GAME FOR A LAUGH

Sam & Max features a variety of hilarious sub-games added by the programmers to provide a bonus for the player

Wak-a-Rat is a variation on the old mole-bashing theme. Simply click the pointer on one of the little blighters and Sam will swing the mallet. Hitting Max may be fun, but earns you no points

Car bomb is my favourite sub-game of the bunch. Line up your cars on the road and try to take out the opposition before they bomb your vehicles! A great version of battleships, indeed

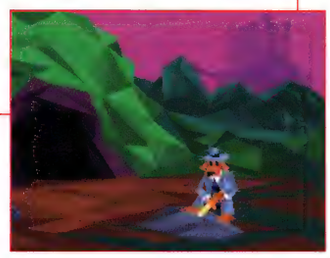
This may take some working out, but when you've sussed out the technique involved, the golfing becomes second nature

This is not a game, more of a diversion. Dress up Sam and Max in various items of clothing. It's limited gameplay-wise, but fun!

Remember Crayola crayons? Here's your chance to fill in the empty spaces with gaudy colours in Sam and Max's very own colouring book

REVIEW

CAN IT GET BETTER?



Even state-of-the-art Virtual Reality techniques are used in one particular scene, and we all know how good the state of Virtual Reality technology is at the moment!

After spending a great deal of time with the game (it has been responsible for an awful lot of very late nights), I can only conclude that it is probably the best point-and-click adventure I've ever played.

While I don't often make such heady claims or dish out such accolades very often (only X-Wing has ever provoked me into the statement "this is the best game I've ever played"), Sam & Max really surprised me. I'll admit that I was expecting great things of it, but to be truthful my expectations were both met and exceeded – something that very rarely happens.

Unfortunately, due to the timing of the games' arrival into our offices, we were unable to include Sam & Max in this month's Super Test, but I can tell you now that it would easily have scored a superb five out of five in every category. It's been wonderfully scripted, it looks superb, it's outrageously funny, the puzzles are both logical and taxing, the user-interface is a dream to use and to top it all off, it's a bigger game than DOTT so you can enjoy it for longer. To put the icing on the cake, CD-ROM owners will be able to enjoy a full talkie version in January as well.

What better Christmas pressie can you ask for than the latest and greatest LucasArts adventure game? If you're a lover of adventures, this is THE game for your collection. **SCORE** ★★★★★

SAM & MAX FREELANCE POLICE
TM & © 1991 by STEVE PURCELL
LETTERED BY: L. LOIS BUHALIS
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: KALANI STREICHER
THAT WAS CLOSE! IMAGINE IT, MAX. WE WERE ACTUALLY STUPIED ALIVE BY A SORRY BAND OF GASSY SMELLING PIRATES.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE MONKEY WOULD DIG US UP TO RIFLE OUR WALLETS?
YOU DON'T EVEN CARRY A WALLET.
YEAH BUT NOW I CAN FASHION ONE FROM THIS HANDSOME MONKEY SCALP.
Mmm IT'S STILL WARM.
YOU ARE A CRUEL AND HATEFUL BEAST, MAX.
RUNNGG
SAM AND MAX FREE!.. YEEP! WE'RE ON OUR WAY!
NO TIME FOR INCOMPREHENSIBLE YIK YAK LITTLE BUDDY..
..LOOKS LIKE THE CHEESE IS FINALLY HITTING THE FAN BACK IN WORLD WAR II.. GET THE CAR KEYS!
WOOF!
WELL, THIS SEEMS TO BE A LIKELY SPOT FOR HITLER'S MISGUIDED GENIUSES TO BE ROUND DESIGNING THE MOST THREATENING AND PECULIAR FLYING WEAPONS OF ALL TIME, OR UNTIL THE NEXT BATCH.
HEY, 'NUFF SAID.
ENTSCHULDIGEN SIE FRÄULEIN. IST DIES DER ZUG NACH FRANKFURT? I MEAN... OKAY YOU BARBARIC MAKERS OF ALL THAT IS VILE AND DESTRUCTIVE. MY PAL MAX WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A PLEA FOR PEACE.
MAX: GUTER HAMS
COME ON MR. H. IF EVERYONE WOULD JUST TRY TO GET ALONG THEN... WELL MAYBE THERE'D BE NO MORE WARS AND YOU'D GET A CHANCE TO START WHIPPING THAT MOUSTACHE BACK INTO SHAPE.
ICH WERDE DICH MEINEM HAUSSCHAKAL OTTO FÜTTERN.
OH GOSH. I GUESS I CAN'T STOP MYSELF FROM DOING THIS!
CRUNCH
WELL WE GOT THROUGH THAT WITH JUST A PINCH OF VIOLENCE. ALTHOUGH I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE MY BEST FRIEND PUT HIS MOUTH ON HITLER'S HEAD.
SAM & MAX
TASTES JUST LIKE CHICKEN!
BUT YOU KNOW? I HAVE THE CREEPY FEELING WE MAY HAVE INDELIBLY STAINED THE SENSITIVE FABRIC OF TIME.
PBTHHHH!
BABY'S FIRST BOOK OF TERRIFYING WAR CRIMES BY the LUFTWAFFE
Awww, YOU BUST ME UP, LITTLE PAL.

A WORD WITH THE CREATORS

Steve Purcell and his team of designers have beavered away for donkey's years to bring you the best in PC entertainment. Working with Purcell are Sam & Max Hit the Road co-designers, Sean Clarke and Michael Stemmle. Stemmle was lead programmer for LucasArts award-winning adventure, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, and Clarke led the conversions of popular titles such as Fate of Atlantis, Monkey Island and Loom to Macintosh, Amiga and CD-ROM platforms.

Q Tell us about the characters Sam and Max.

STEVE *Sam and Max are a dog and rabbit who call themselves freelance police because it gives them licence to do whatever they want. Operating under the pretence of protecting society, they are actually more concerned with having a wild time. The duo could be described as overzealous since they are not too worried about upholding the bothersome constitutional rights of the goofy criminal types encountered. The world they operate in is an exaggerated version of our own – everything seems recognisable, but with a definite twist.*

Q How long have the Sam & Max comics been around?

STEVE *Sam & Max first saw print in the early 1980s in editions of a California art college newspaper. It was then published as a comic book in 1987 with the most recent edition being from Marvel Comics in 1992.*

Q Who are they aimed at?

STEVE *The market is primarily college-age and older readers because of the obscure references in the character banter. However, the art style means they also appeal to younger readers too.*

Q How well is this material suited to a computer game translation?

STEVE *The Sam and Max material is really a pretty good fit – ranking somewhere between Indiana Jones and Waiting for Godot in terms of translation difficulty.*

Q Why did you decide to produce a game about these characters?

STEVE *We decided to base a game around Sam and Max because they have been everyone's favourite characters here at LucasArts for a number of years. There was always idle chatter about doing a Sam and Max game, but the tumblers never quite fell into place. Until now, that is.*

Q How faithful is the game to the original comics?

MICHAEL *We have tried really, really hard to capture the flavour of the Sam & Max comics. That's why Steve [Purcell] has been involved with the game every step of the way. His presence on the project has kept us from straying too far from the absurd universe of Sam and Max. Steve has also given us some of the game's funniest jokes.*

Q How would you describe Sam & Max, the game?

MICHAEL *Sam & Max Hit the Road is a rollicking romp through America's cultural backwaters, as Sam and Max search for an escaped bigfoot.*

Q Does Sam & Max break new ground?

SEAN *We have opened up the hood of LucasArts' SCUMM system and done some serious tinkering. The most obvious change from our previous adventures is that we've switched to a full-screen, all-icon, no-verb interface.*

Q Are there plans for a CD-ROM version, and if so, what new features will this version include?

MICHAEL *You bet your sweet bippy there will be a CD-ROM version featuring full speech.*

THE NEW SCUMM SYSTEM

Moving this eye over selected locations may reveal more items which you can stuff into your cardboard box

No, this is not the fight icon. A clenched fist merely indicates that an object can be picked up

This miraculous set of false teeth will allow conversation with any other character in the game

This one is ingenious. Move it over an item and the open hand will close, indicating that an item can be used

This flimsy old cardboard box is your inventory and it can hold up to 31 items – now that's a lot

REVIEW

GAMES ROUND-UP

IN THIS SECTION PC PLAYER WILL REVIEW SHOOT'EM-UPS, BEAT'EM-UPS...YOU KNOW, THE GAMES THAT DON'T REQUIRE TOO MUCH THOUGHT, ALONG WITH CD-ROM AND UPDATES OF GAMES PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE.

AIR COMBAT CLASSICS

US GOLD
£44.99
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 3, 640k, 286, VGA/EGA,
SUPPORTS
Joystick, Soundblaster, Adlib (Battlehawks 1942 doesn't use a Sound Card)

There aren't very many times when the word 'classic' can be justifiably used as a description for a game, but this could very well be such an occasion. LucasArts' Air Combat Classics compilation package contains what must surely rank as the definitive World War II flight and fight simulation. Couple this with two other games that, although showing their age a little, are still worthy inclusions and you've got yourself a prime candidate for the value for money title of the year.

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe was released originally back in 1991. Taking the role of an American pilot flying for the US eighth air force or the German counterpart flying for the Luftwaffe, the end of the war is yours to do with what you will. There are a plethora of missions to fly, ranging from intercept missions in a German FW 190A-5 to bombing missions in the B-17 Flying Fortress. Couple this with a tour of duty in which you try to keep your pilot alive through as much of the war as you can, and a mission builder that allows you to plan and execute an almost limitless amount of sorties, and it's not hard to see why SWOTL received so much praise. The original mission add-on disks are also thrown in, giving a new lease of life to the game.

Battle of Britain and Battlehawks, although starting to look dated, make great accompaniments to SWOTL. BOB is set during the summer of 1940 and allows you to take either a British or German stance.

The programming team responsible for SWOTL also produced BOB, and it shows. The graphics, although not great by today's standards, portray the action well. There is the now obligatory camera for recording all your dogfighting achievements and, like SWOTL, a mission planner and extra mission disks have been included in the package. Due to the time difference between this and the aforementioned SWOTL, the number of different aircraft that you can fly overall is quite considerable, incorporating the famous Spitfires and Hurricanes of the RAF.

The last game is Battlehawks 1942, and this is the only one that actually looks as old as the ark. The Pacific is the preferred theatre, with the US and Japan fighting for control of the seas. This does look extremely dated, with very simple graphics and a pretty unconvincing cockpit layout. There's no mission planner and once the missions available have been played, that's it.

SWOTL is still the best WWII flight sim to date, and with the inclusion of BOB, Battlehawks and all the add-on mission disks, Air Combat Classics is the definitive flight sim compilation available. Buy it now! **SCORE ★★★★**

GAMES ROUND-UP

SPEED RACER

ACCOLADE
£39.99
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 3, 3Mb RAM, 386, VGA, 9Mb Hard Disk
SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, ProAudio Spectrum, Adlib, Roland Sound Cards

Racing games on the PC fall into two major categories. In the first instance, you find the sims such as Formula 1 and Car and Driver. Both these portray the race from a first-person perspective and offer a certain amount of realism. The other type which Speed Racer fits into, is the out and out arcade type in which you control your car around an assortment of tracks, bumping, shooting and smashing into anything that gets in your way. To back up all this carnage, there is a story that tells of one man's struggle to finance his racing car, the MACH 5, with his son collecting the necessary readies by competing in various races and hopefully winning. Cobblers – what we actually have here is an arcade game that looks terrible and plays only slightly better.

If you've ever seen the Mega Drive game, Road Rash, then you'll pretty much know what to expect from Speed Racer. You view your car from above and behind, and as the road stretches away in the distance various bad guys in souped up Austin Maxis attempt to do you serious damage. All is not lost however, armed with an assortment of lasers and turbo boosters you can give as good as you get. Sounds exciting, doesn't it? Or maybe not.

The graphics, although moderately smooth, contain very little detail. The cars are lacking and the roadside detail is limited to nothing more than trees and the occasional road sign. All this could be ignored if there was a decent game lurking underneath, but sadly there isn't. It's too easy to play and as far as variety goes, forget it. The tracks are all too similar, with only the backgrounds changing to any great extent. If you really do have a hankering for something akin to this, go out and buy yourself a console – the PC doesn't do this type of game justice. **SCORE ★**

GOBLIINS 2

COKTEL VISION
£39.99
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 5, 640k, 286 16Mhz, VGA, CD-ROM with Audio Output
SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, MDO, Intersound

Is it a puzzle game or is it a point and click adventure? That's the question you've got to ask yourself as far as Gobliins 2 is concerned. Taking control of two suitably stupid goblins going by the names of Fingus and Winkel, you embark on a quest to rescue the kidnapped son of your beloved king.

The thing that makes Gobliins just that little bit different is the way the game is structured. Unlike normal point and click games, Gobliins consists of three or four screens over which a series of puzzles must be solved. Only after completing these can the player then progress onto the next series of puzzles, and so on until the final goal of the game has been accomplished. It's a bit like playing a game of patience, with each turn of the card revealing a little bit more of the solution.

Another feature that stands out is the fact that to successfully navigate the problems both characters must be used. For example, in the early stages of the game, matches need to be acquired somehow. After a careful search, they are revealed to be hidden in the mouth of a stuffed tiger that refuses to let them go. The solution? Get Winkel to stand on its tail and when it opens its mouth to scream, Fingus reaches in and snatches them away. It's a nice touch and one that makes the problems a little more substantial than they initially appear to be.

As nice as the graphics are to look at and as logical as the puzzles are, Gobliins falls down in the way that it plays. You don't have to think as deeply as in other games that occupy this niche, because to get one of the characters to perform an action all you have to do is click on the object and the necessary actions will then be carried out for you. There are none of the usual commands, such as examine, pick up and talk to, it's just a case of pointing and clicking in the simplest possible way. For players who are used to more advanced adventure games, this will be very off-putting, but for those of us who have a slightly lower IQ (and a slightly lower patience threshold), then Gobliins 2 will offer a good few hours of entertainment and a few laughs along the way. **SCORE ★★★**

MERLIN

DIGITAL INTEGRATION
£7.99
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 5, 1Mb RAM, 386, VGA
SUPPORTS
Joystick, Soundblaster, Adlib Sound Cards

Using the same graphics engine as Tornado, Merlin spins its way into the shops. Originally developed as an aptitude trainer to test out the abilities of potential pilots for the Royal Navy, Merlin puts you in the cockpit of the Navy workhorse, the Merlin helicopter. Taking control of this manoeuvrable beast, it's up to you to land on the back of an unnamed frigate, and do so in some highly unfavourable conditions.

There are three levels to the game. Easy has the frigate standing still, so all you have to do is wing in there and sit her down on the deck gently. The medium option has the frigate moving through the sea, and the hard setting throws in some crosswinds just to make it that bit more exciting. All this is presented in much the same graphic style as Tornado, with the ship being packed with detail and other Merlins flying about giving you something to avoid.

If you do manage to land successfully, you are then given a percentage rating, taking into account your deck position when you landed, your approach and how hard you actually hit the deck, followed by an action replay of your landing. If you've ever seen the flight sim test in the Krypton Factor, then all this will be familiar to you.

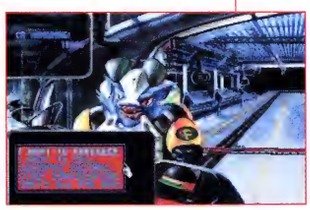
The game can be played with the keyboard and joystick, but for the full effect two joysticks are a must. In this way, the collective and cyclic controls of the whirlybird are simulated excellently and it really is a joy to fly.

Anyone expecting to get up there and start shooting things is in for a shock – there are only three levels to the game, and they involve nothing more than landing the aircraft on the ship. However, if that sounds boring, then let me assure you that it's far from it. The challenge of bringing the 'copter in to land on a ship that's cutting through the sea at about 40 knots, while all the time being buffeted around by crosswinds is very difficult.

This will be one of those games that you get out to unwind with. For the sum of only £7.99, flight sim fans should seek out a copy. **SCORE ★★★★**

PROTOSTAR - WAR ON THE FRONTIER

TSUNAMI
£39.99
REQUIREMENTS
DOS 5, 640k, 386, VGA, CD-ROM, Mouse
SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland Sound Cards



The Skeetch empire wants the human race dead. Resources and morale in the human sector of the universe are at an all-time low, and without adequate funding and aid it may not be able to stand up to the onslaught for very much longer. You play the part of an agent working for Protostar, sent undercover into the enemy sectors to disrupt supply lines and collect valuable supplies, to trade with other races and make allies.

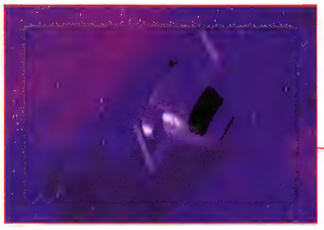
Protostar is a mix of different gaming elements combined to make a very playable adventure-cum-trading game. The majority of the game is played using the point and click method, with all options carried out with the use of an onscreen cursor. Starting in one of the three human outposts, you have the chance to buy crew members, repair your ship or just relax in the lounge bar. After equipping, it's out to the ship with a view to making some money.

The galaxy is split into many sectors, each having particular needs. This part of the game is similar in style to the game Elite and an astute business head is needed. It's then back into space to trade once more and watch for pirates or irate Skeetch.

Movement around the galaxy is by hyper space or local travel. To make more money to finance the battle raging back home you'll need to go further to obtain better goods and prices, but this takes more fuel – it's a fine balance!

You'll meet different characters and questions can be asked by clicking on a relevant line of text. Depending on your bargaining skills the character will either join up, or tell you to shove off!

The manual says the game is, "..an interactive game tailored for sci-fi, action and role-playing enthusiasts". The action is a little thin on the ground, but the trading and adventure elements are good. Combine this with a strong story, and Protostar is a game that should appeal to the majority of people who enjoy games like Elite and Wing Commander. **SCORE ★★★**



The superb intro sequence follows Jack's abduction at the hands of the IRDS taxmen. The fully-rendered graphics are very cool, but look a little out of place next to the in-game visuals

PAGE 86

INNOCENT UNTIL CAUGHT

ON A WORLD THAT SPANS THREE PLANETS, ONE CLOUD CITY AND A LEAST FOUR BARS - IT'S UP TO YOU TO PAY BACK THE TAXMAN, CLEAR YOUR NAME AND MAKE A QUICK BUCK AT THE SAME TIME.

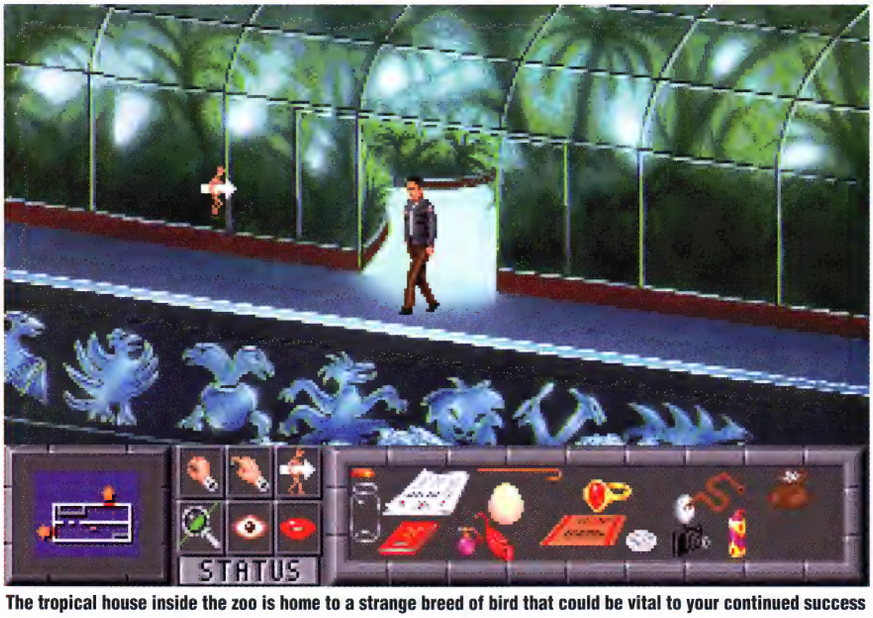
PRODUCT
Innocent Until Caught

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Psygnosis

PRICE
£44.99

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 1Mb Ram, 286 (+25 MHz), 256 VGA, 18Mb Hard Drive space, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib, Roland, Joystick



The tropical house inside the zoo is home to a strange breed of bird that could be vital to your continued success

REVIEW

JACK T Ladd, master thief, all-round wise guy and star of Psygnosis' Innocent Until Caught, is in big trouble. You see, he needs a drink badly and there are no bars nearby. It's a desperate situation that is far worse than the massive tax bill the federation are chasing him for...bills can be paid later, but a thirst needs to be quenched!

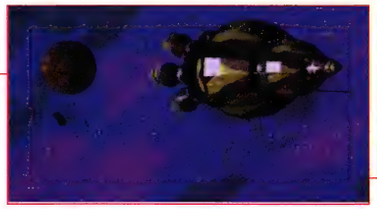
As tax bills go, Jack's contributions are massively in the red, with taxmen from every corner of the planet after his wallet. Clearing this unpaid debt is the only way Jack is ever going to be able to show his face in public again, but raising such a large amount of money (the figure being far too embarrassing for Jack to reveal here) is not going to be easy, especially on such a smog-ridden, sleaze bag of a planet as Tayte.

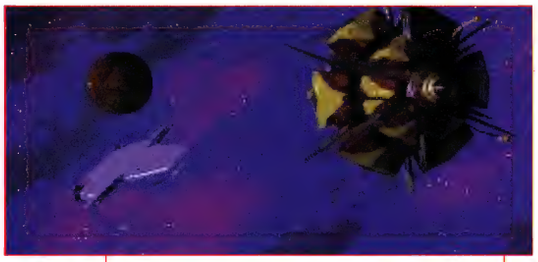
"AS TAX BILLS GO, JACK'S CONTRIBUTIONS ARE MASSIVELY IN THE RED, WITH TAXMEN FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE PLANET AFTER HIS WALLET"

If you call a cab, make sure you've got enough money to pay the driver or there's a good chance he'll run off

Jack's story begins some time before his excursion to Tayte. In his line of work, Jack has crossed many paths and upset many a mild-mannered character. A planet called Bagapoo is where Jack made his first mistake – he stole an incredibly rare and valuable piece of art and by the time his contacts had sorted him out a buyer, he had completely forgotten from which planet he originally stole it. Stupidly, Jack then tried to sell it to the same guy he stole it from, who unfortunately had in his possession a machete and a penchant for revenge. From the insane flash in the dealer's eyes, Jack rightly concluded that he had to get off this planet pretty quickly...

To this end, Jack stole a ship and tore away from certain decapitation. However, it was a case of out of the frying pan into the fire as the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service (or the taxmen if you prefer) locked onto him, dragged him from his ship and secured him to a chair for interrogation. Before release Jack ended up with a tax demand for more money than he could ever imagine, and 28 days in which to pay it. Will Jack be able to pay back this extortionate sum of money, or should he slip away in the hope that the taxmen will forget about him?





SPIN THE WHEEL OF JUSTICE

Innocent Until Caught takes the form of a graphical, point-and-click adventure. The screen is split into four distinct areas, the largest area (the top three-quarters) being the main game screen where any visual or interactive elements of the game are revealed first and where all the action is displayed. Bottom-left is a sort of location scanner, showing available exits and any major physical structures. This map can also be used to move around (say, by clicking on a highlighted exit) if the thought of moving your arm seems too much like hard work. Left of centre can be found the main icon panel with six icons, allowing Jack to interact with the people and objects he finds on his travels – he is able to take, use, walk, look, scan and talk. Finally there is the inventory where Jack can carry any item he can hold in his hands.

Jack begins at the Spaceport after being apprehended by the taxmen on his way to Tayte. It is from here that he must begin his quest to clear his name and pay off his tax debts. First Jack must find a bar where he will be able to guzzle a few shots of the least fashionable bottled lagers, then find some work to earn some cash.

Starting with no money or possessions is a problem, because this means that Jack cannot simply walk into a bar and buy a drink, he must swindle the cash from somewhere (drunken tramps lying in the streets may have a few spare coppers). Talking to the locals may reveal a few clues. Initially he finds the local 'sexual servicing centre' and a pawn (sic) shop of ill repute to be some help. Conversation with the various shady individuals is achieved by selecting sentences from a list of questions and statements from inside a speech bubble – the lewd nature of Innocent Until Caught ensures that there are plenty of strange and downright rude situations you can talk yourself into! Broad-minded players out there will certainly love the game's darker side, but unfortunately it still doesn't quite have the same smutty but sophisticated nature that Microprose's Rex Nebular portrays.

But it is puzzle solving that is this game's mainstay. To progress you will obviously have to find and utilise the right object in the correct manner. Initially, Innocent is simple enough to get into as the solutions to certain problems have to be worked out with brainpower, not mere guesswork, and there are enough visual and spoken clues to prompt you in the right direction. Once you've gained access to the subway trains the game opens up even further and you are able to spread your nefarious schemes throughout a larger part of the city. Innocent is a big game – the city is sprawling and the denizens are corrupt, so finding some dodgy money-making scam is never too difficult.

The streets of Tayte look good on screen. A dense, smoggy atmosphere is created using effective light shading techniques and an overall air of industrial and social overspill envelopes the cyberpunk feel of the story-line. On the other hand, the animated characters are quite badly drawn in places and the portrait close-ups (seen when you converse with a character) are pretty poor throughout. Fortunately, the conversation is usually fun (where else would you get the opportunity to say ➤

"STARTING WITH NO MONEY OR POSSESSIONS IS A PROBLEM, BECAUSE THIS MEANS THAT JACK CANNOT SIMPLY WALK INTO A BAR AND BUY A DRINK, HE MUST SWINDLE THE CASH FROM SOMEWHERE (DRUNKEN TRAMPS LYING IN THE STREETS MAY HAVE A FEW SPARE COPPERS)"

Innocent Until Caught is full of sexism, violence and stupidity – all in the best possible taste of course

The status screen shows just how far into the game you are. Here you can also save and load a game

Jack T Ladd – master thief

No, it's not the finger wiggler – it's the use icon

Move from one place to another using this pointer

Jack's inventory can hold many items

Plan view of the immediate area showing all available exits

Pick up any item with the hand icon

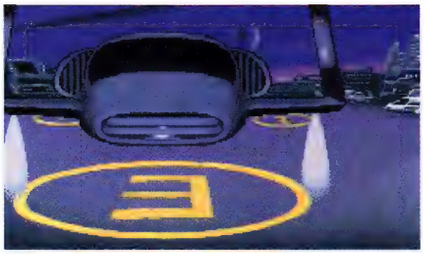
Looking at certain objects will reveal useful clues

Eye, eye (groan) – it's the scan icon

These lips are made for talking

One quest will have you inside the Tayte museum (the Tayte Gallery?) trying to steal a valuable artefact. Pull it off and you'll need never be short of drinks' money again

REVIEW



Tayte is a moon that is obscured from the light by its parent planet for months at a time – similar to Earth's polar seasons

Yeah, I'm gonna see the Kahooly Bird and the Ness and all the usual things: two big feet and sharp claws!
That's nice. See ya! Can I have that balloon? I hate kids. Bug off!

Jack T Ladd is the king of the one-liner. This guy would make even Freddie Kreuger turn in his grave

You need that balloon, but just how are you going to get it?

Hi there, big boy. What can I do to...er FOR you?
How's about a freebie? I just came in to admire the view... Say, you don't get many of those to the pound!

As with most games of this type, conversation is modelled around a list of set responses. Choosing the right one may not always be obvious

Tayte has a number of bars dotted throughout its capital city, which is great news for Jack T Ladd!

➤ "You don't get many of those to the pound, love"?!), which is a relief.

The interactive interface is not the best I've seen in this genre and appears to be a hybrid of the usual Sierra-style cursor, involving clicking the right mouse button cycles through the icons, and a less intelligent example of the LucasArts SCUMM system (pre Sam & Max of course). Manipulating objects can sometimes be frustrating, especially when you haven't positioned the cursor correctly in relation to the target object. If the objects had clearly marked positioning points (as the objects do in Freddy Pharkas for example), it would be easier to use them. The way objects can be stacked inside the inventory panel is quite strange – in theory you could place as many items in it as there are in the entire game, it's just a case of stacking them on top of one another. Calling up the status screen will also allow you to use/wear objects such as clothing and rings, and Jack's coat pockets can store numerous items too. The game can be saved (there are 99 save slots) and progress can be monitored from this menu too. Overall, the interface in Innocent Until Caught is adequate and does its job.

"MANIPULATING OBJECTS CAN SOMETIMES BE FRUSTRATING, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU HAVEN'T POSITIONED THE CURSOR CORRECTLY IN RELATION TO THE TARGET OBJECT. IF THE OBJECTS HAD CLEARLY MARKED POSITIONING POINTS IT WOULD BE EASIER TO USE THEM"

Before Jack reaches Tayte he is kidnapped by the taxmen and subjected to a torturous interview at the hands of KLEPTO the robot

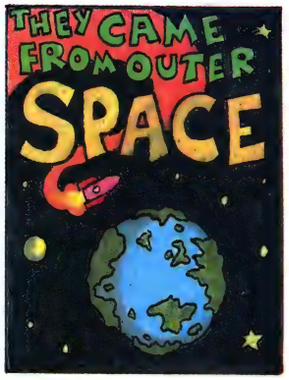
The adventures of Jack T Ladd are novel and amusing, however I couldn't help feeling that Innocent Until Caught wasn't quite as good as I'd expected. When I first began to play the game I wasn't too enthusiastic – the ropey presentation and the limited interface do nothing for first impressions. When I began solving a few of the earlier puzzles things started to improve slightly, but it was only when I found a number of the more interesting characters to chat to that I began to enjoy myself. Awful portrait graphics aside (did I see Patrick Moore, Harrison Ford and Nik Wild somewhere in there?), dialogue with the colourful individuals of the game is its saving grace. Innocent Until Caught does have its moments, but these seem to be due more to the programmer's warped sense of humour than the impact of the all-essential gameplay. **SCORE ★★**

REVIEW

This is an age of free love and virtual pornography – rumours indicate that this kind of computer-simulated stimulation is actually being developed in real life

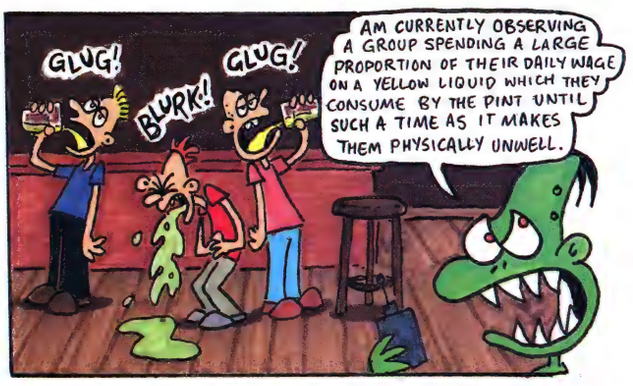
Once you find your way into the subway warren, the city will become your oyster. Take note of the station names and you shouldn't get lost

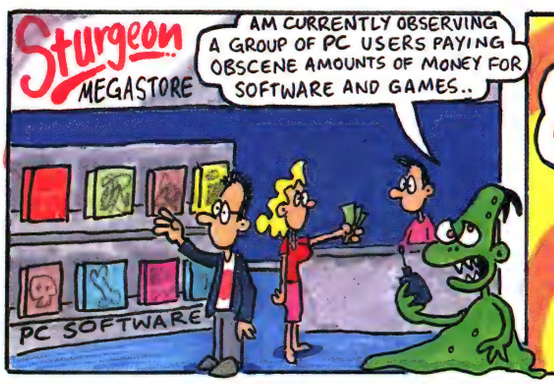
UP TO £15 CASH FOR PC GAMES! BLISTERING BARGAINS GALORE!



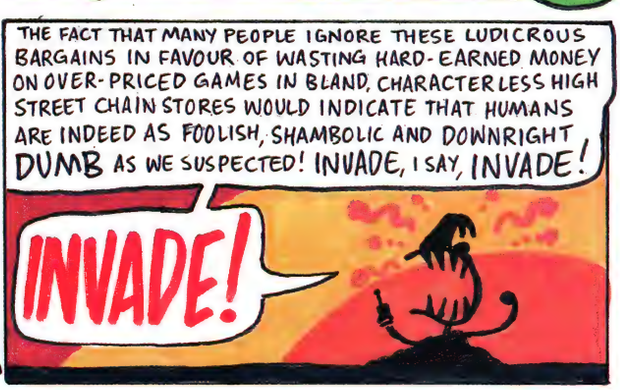
NOW CREW, AS I AM SURE YOU ARE AWARE, WE HAVE BEEN MONITORING THE SO-CALLED "TELEVISION SIGNALS" OF THIS PLANET FOR SOME TIME NOW. THE NATURE OF THESE BROADCASTS WOULD TEND TO SUGGEST THAT THE "HUMANS" ARE A MINDLESS, SHAMBLING MASS OF BACKWARD, DRIBBLING IMBECILES. PLANET EARTH IS, THEREFORE, RIPE FOR INVASION!!
NOEL'S HOUSE PARTY
GLADIATORS
THAT'S MY DO
FAMILY FORT
ELDORADO
BOON
NEXT

HONEVER, IT IS NECESSARY TO ASCERTAIN JUST HOW MORONIC THE EARTHLINGS ARE BEFORE WE PLAN OUR ASSAULT.. YOUR MISSION IS TO OBSERVE EVERYDAY HUMAN LIFE AND REPORT BACK ON ANY EXAMPLES OF GROSS STUPIDITY YOU COME ACROSS..
DATE

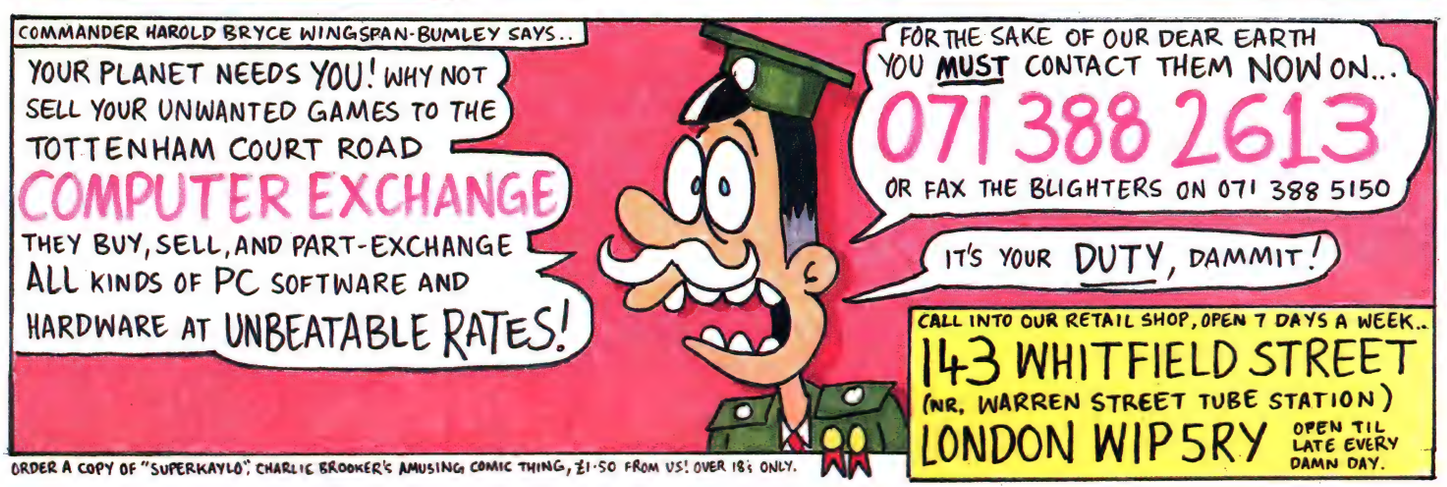

GLUG!
BLURK!
GLUG!
AM CURRENTLY OBSERVING A GROUP SPENDING A LARGE PROPORTION OF THEIR DAILY WAGE ON A YELLOW LIQUID WHICH THEY CONSUME BY THE PINT UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS IT MAKES THEM PHYSICALLY UNWELL.


Sturgeon MEGASTORE
AM CURRENTLY OBSERVING A GROUP OF PC USERS PAYING OBSCENE AMOUNTS OF MONEY FOR SOFTWARE AND GAMES..
PC SOFTWARE

MY RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE ALSO BUY AND PART-EXCHANGE ALL TYPES OF PC SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE AT UNBEATABLE RATES.. REPEAT... UNBEATABLE RATES!


THE FACT THAT MANY PEOPLE IGNORE THESE LUDICROUS BARGAINS IN FAVOUR OF WASTING HARD-EARNED MONEY ON OVER-PRICED GAMES IN BLAND, CHARACTERLESS HIGH STREET CHAIN STORES WOULD INDICATE THAT HUMANS ARE INDEED AS FOOLISH, SHAMBOLIC AND DOWNRIGHT DUMB AS WE SUSPECTED! INVADE, I SAY, INVADE!
INVADE!

CHARLIE BROOKER™


COMMANDER HAROLD BRYCE WINGSPAN-BUMLEY SAYS..
YOUR PLANET NEEDS YOU! WHY NOT SELL YOUR UNWANTED GAMES TO THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE THEY BUY, SELL, AND PART-EXCHANGE ALL KINDS OF PC SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE AT UNBEATABLE RATES!
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR DEAR EARTH YOU MUST CONTACT THEM NOW ON...
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OR FAX THE BLIGHTERS ON 071 388 5150
IT'S YOUR DUTY, DAMMIT!
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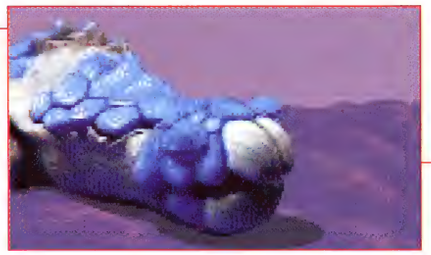
(NR. WARREN STREET TUBE STATION)
LONDON W1P 5RY
OPEN TIL LATE EVERY DAMN DAY.

ORDER A COPY OF "SUPERKAYLO", CHARLIE BROOKER'S AMUSING COMIC THING, £1·50 FROM US! OVER 18's ONLY.

Zoom in for a closer view of the Theroids and you'll be treated to a fully animated Claymation sequence. They eat, they bite, they growl...hey, they even get it on with each other!



UNNATURAL SELECTION

CREATE GENETIC MONSTERS, THEN TAKE THEM INTO BATTLE WITH MAXIS' NEW OFFERING.

PRODUCT
Unnatural Selection

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Maxis

RELEASE DATE
January

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 640k Ram, 386SX, VGA, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Sound Source Sound Cards

EVEN though Jurassic Park is almost extinct, dinosaur mania is still going strong. The bandwagon is creaking under the weight of everyone who has jumped on, and now Maxis is looking for a way to clamber on. However, to its credit, Maxis hasn't bothered with the dinosaur angle of Jurassic Park, concentrating instead on the idea of genetic cloning and mutation. This is Unnatural Selection, a game in which genes are much more important than machine-guns, where a single strand of DNA can mean the difference between defeat and victory.

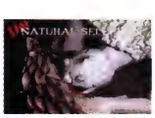
Maxis has blessed the software scene for years now with its highly acclaimed Sim series, including the superb SimCity, SimEarth, SimLife...the list goes on. Unnatural Selection is aimed at players of these games, especially SimLife. As a scientist under the command of the government, Dr Jackson has been brought in to use his skills in genetic mutation to create a powerful army of genetically engineered mutants. The reason for this isn't to take over the world, but to save it. A former colleague of Jackson's has already beaten him to creating a formidable horde of horrific beasts and is currently threatening to overpower the army.

Starting in the lab, Jackson begins with three different types of genetic outcasts named Theroids. Each type of Theroid excels in different areas – Hulks are strong, Slugs have a lot of stamina and Zips are fast, but by cross-breeding the creatures perfect soldiers may be created. The Theroids can be improved even further by subjecting them to measured doses of radiation which slowly mutate the beasts, making them even more powerful. Unfortunately, one side-effect of radiation mutation is that it can spread viruses, so any Theroid contracting a virus must be slain, and the same fate falls to weaker animals. Only the strongest breed will survive.

With the army created, it's time to put it into action. Carefully plan your attack on each island (of which there are nine), allocating drops zones for each of the six helicopters which transport the Theroids and their food supplies (even though they're horribly mutated, they still need feeding). Providing you have enough creatures in your army, the enemy Theroids will eventually lay down and die, leaving you to return to the lab and create more powerful animals. Unfortunately, you have to start again from scratch!

"UNNATURAL SELECTION IS AN INTRIGUING BLEND OF THOUGHT PROVOKING STRATEGY AND TRIAL AND ERROR EXPERIMENTATION"

Aimed at players of the Maxis Sim series, Unnatural Selection is an intriguing blend of thought provoking strategy and trial and error experimentation – so don't expect an invincible army to be created instantly. But before you rush out in the hope of dabbling in the chaotic world of genetic engineering, just hang on. Unnatural Selection isn't due out until January next year, when it will appear under the Maxis label for just under thirty quid. ■

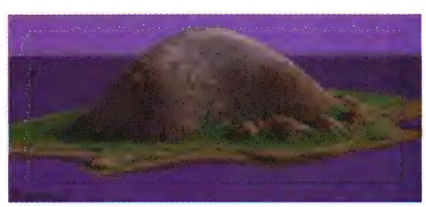


PREVIEW

When two Theroids meet, they instinctively fight. As they claw and tear at each other, all you can do is sit back and watch. Keep your fingers crossed, because this time there's no points for second place

The Sat-Beam orbits the planet and can fire down mood-changing rays. Get your Theroids to fight more ferociously by zapping them with fight rays, or make them horny with the mate beam!

Commander Griggs is always on your back. He doesn't understand that sometimes science takes time, and he's always hassling you with impossible deadlines. One of these days you'll show him...



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8-bit COMPARISON

	MONO		STEREO	
	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY BX II	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER VERSION 2.0	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER PRO II	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY NX PRO EXTRA
No Of Sound Standards	2	2	3	5
AdLib	●	●	●	●
Sound Blaster Version 2	●	●	●	●
Sound Blaster Pro II		●	●	●
Covox Speech Thing			●	●
Disney Sound Source			●	●
FM Synthesiser - OPL2	●	●		
FM Synthesiser - OPL3			●	●
Manual Volume Control	●	●	●	●
Digital Software Volume Control			8 steps	16 steps
Digital Bass & Treble Control			●	
Sampling Rate, Recording Up To:	23KHz	15KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Sampling Rate, Playback Up To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Game Port, With MIDI Option	●	●	●	●
Dynamic Filtering For Better Sound	●			●
CD Audio In	●			●
Can Use Microphone And CD During Digital Playback	●		●	●
SMT Board For Better Reliability	●		●	●
Free Speakers	●			●
CD-ROM Interface (AT-Bus)				●
Panasonic Interface				●
Mitsumi Interface				●
Sony Interface				OPTION
CD-ROM Interface (SCSI)				OPTION
Microphone AGC Amplifier	●		●	●
Stereo Microphone Input				●
Software Selectable IRQ, DMA & Address Setting Configuration Retained When Power Off				●
Mixer Support From More Than One Source During Recording	●			●
Built-In Amplifier	●	●	●	●
Stereo Lines In And Out			●	●

16-bit COMPARISON

	STEREO				
	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY NX PRO 16	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY BASIC 16	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER 16 ASP	AZTECH BUSINESS AUDIO BOARD	MICROSOFT M'SOFT WINDOWS SOUND SYSTEM
No Of Sound Standards	6	6	2	2	1
AdLib	●	●	●	●	
Sound Blaster Version 2	●	●	●		
Sound Blaster Pro II	●	●			
Microsoft Windows Sound System	●	●		●	●
Covox Speech Thing	●	●			
Disney Sound Source	●	●			
FM Synthesiser - OPL3	●	●	●	●	●
Digital Software Volume Control	●	●	●	●	●
Digital Bass & Treble Control	●	●	●	●	●
CD Quality Sampling Rate, Record & Playback Up To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Game Port, With MIDI Option	●	●	●		
Dynamic Filtering For Better Sound	●	●	●	●	●
CD Audio In	●	●	●	●	
Can Use Microphone And CD During Digital Playback	●	●	●	●	●
CD-ROM Interface (AT-Bus)					
Panasonic Interface	●	●	●	●	
Mitsumi Interface	●	●		●	
Sony Interface	OPTION	OPTION		OPTION	
CD-ROM Interface (SCSI)	OPTION			OPTION	
Microphone AGC Amplifier	●	●		●	●
Stereo Microphone Input	●	●		●	●
Software Selectable IRQ, DMA & Address Setting Configuration Retained When Power Off	●	●			
Mixer Support From More Than One Source During Recording	●	●	●	●	●
Option For Upgrade To 16-bit Wave-Table Synthesis	●	●	●		
Stereo Lines In And Out	●	●	●	●	●

ACCESSORIES

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For recording your own vocal samples or sound effects (this microphone is free from Silica with each Sound Galaxy Card).
SOU 9010 **£7.99** +VAT = £9.39

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Connects to the Game Port on the card and provides MIDI IN/OUT as well as an extension for a joystick.
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FREE DELIVERY

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8-bit MONO

2 SOUND STANDARDS

SOUND GALAXY BXII EXTRA

- *8-bit Mono Sound Card*
- *2 Sound Standards*
  AdLib, Sound Blaster v.2
- *FREE Speakers*
- *Dynamic Filtering:*
  For Better Sound Reproduction
- *CD Audio In:*
  Direct Audio Connection from your CD-ROM into the Card
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  Recording and Playback from Multiple Sources
- *Built-In Amplifier*
- *MIDI Interface*
- *13 Software Titles Included*
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Ref: SOU 1002 +VAT = £57.58

8-bit STEREO

5 SOUND STANDARDS

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- *8-bit Stereo Sound Card with CD ROM Interface*
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- *FREE Speakers*
- *CD-ROM Interface (Built-In) For:*
  Panasonic & Mitsumi Drives - Optional Upgrade to SCSI. Optional Sony Connector (See Left).
- *Software Configuration Settings in Eeprom*
- *Software Control of Volume, Bass & Treble*
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- *14 Software Titles Included*
- *FREE Dynamic Microphone from Silica*

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16-bit STEREO

2 SOUND STANDARDS

SOUND GALAXY BUSINESS AUDIO BOARD

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- *2 Sound Standards*
  AdLib, Microsoft Windows Sound System
- *FREE Headphones & Personal Microphone*
- *Ideal for the Serious Business User*
- *CD-ROM Interfaces (Built-In) For:*
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- *Software Control of Volume, Bass & Treble*
- *Built-In Amplifier*
- *6 Software Titles Included*
- *FREE Dynamic Microphone from Silica*

16-bit STEREO + CD ROM INTERFACE **£79**

Ref: SOU 1084 +VAT = £92.83

16-bit STEREO

6 SOUND STANDARDS

SOUND GALAXY BASIC 16

- *16-bit Stereo Sound Card with CD ROM Interface*
- *6 Sound Standards*
  AdLib, Sound Blaster v2, Sound Blaster Pro II, MS Windows Sound System, Covox Speech Thing, Disney Sound Source
- *FREE Headphones*
- *CD-ROM Interfaces (Built-In) For:*
  Panasonic & Mitsumi Drives. Optional Sony Connector (See Above).
- *Software Configuration Settings in Eeprom:*
  Card Doesn't Reset on 'Power-Off'
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- *Built-In Amplifier & MIDI Interface*
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16-bit STEREO + CD ROM INTERFACE **£99**

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16-bit STEREO

4 SOUND STANDARDS

SOUND GALAXY PRO 16 EXTRA

- *16-bit Stereo Sound Card with CD ROM Interface*
- *4 Sound Standards*
  AdLib, Sound Blaster v.2, Sound Blaster Pro II, MS Windows Sound System
- *FREE Headphones & Personal Microphone*
- *CD-ROM Interfaces (Built-In) For:*
  Panasonic & Mitsumi Drives - Optional Upgrade to SCSI. Optional Sony Connector (See Above).
- *Software Control of Volume, Bass & Treble*
- *Built-In Amplifier*
- *MPU401 MIDI Compatible - for the Serious Musician*
- *16 Software Titles Included*
  (inc ComVoice Voice Recognition Program and Monologue for Windows Text to Speech Convertor)
- *Wave Power Upgrade (See Above)*

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COMPETITION

GET A GRIP WITH MEGAGRIP

SAITEK is the manufacturer of the MX-230 MEGAGRIP III – one of the best value PC analog joysticks available, and it has 15 of the beauties to give away to our readers. Each joystick features:

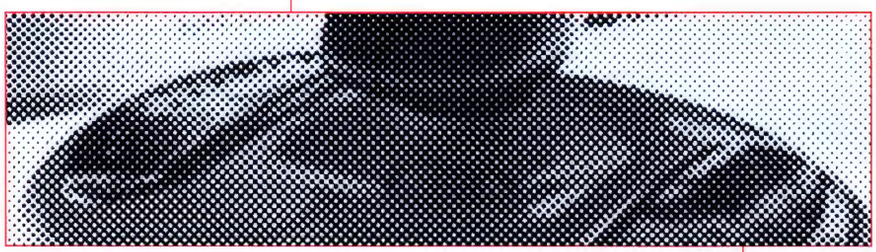
- Full IBM PC/XT/AT/386 & 486 compatibility
- Superior pistol grip design
- Full horizontal/vertical trim adjustment
- Auto-centring
- One thumb-activated fire button
- One trigger-activated fire button
- Turbo speed capacity
- Four sturdy suction cups
- Six foot cable with 15-pin connector

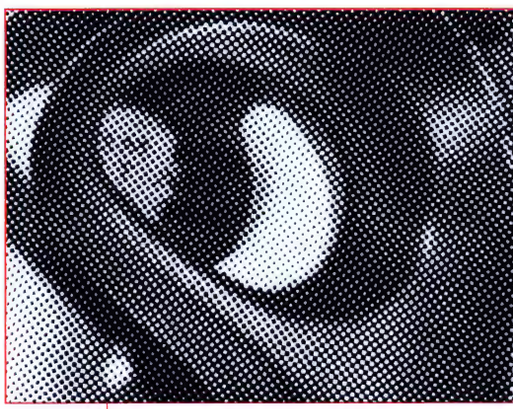
The joystick looks and feels very sturdy and comes recommended by the *PC Player* team. 15 people have the chance to win their very own MEGAGRIP III joystick by answering the following multiple choice question:

A SAITEK MEGAGRIP III WOULD COME IN VERY HANDY AS...
A. A SHOW-STOPPER AT AN ANNE SUMMERS' PARTY
B. A PC GAMES CONTROLLER
C. A DIY TOOL FOR GRIPPING WOOD

Choose either A, B or C and send your entries on a postcard to: Saitek Competition, *PC Player*, 16-17 Hollybush Row, Oxford, OX1 1JH.

Closing date: 1 January, 1994.





COMPETITION

As the B-Wing is more suited to flying up against the larger Imperial Corvettes and frigates, most of its missions are against these powerful battle cruisers

With the inclusion of six historical missions, B-Wing offers any willing rebels the chance to take the B-Wing across the surface of the Death Star and eventually down into the trench to re-enact the final scene from the classic film, Star Wars

The B-Wing flies slightly differently from the X-Wing. Before you fly into combat it is advisable to try your hand at the maze in the pilots' proving ground

Here is the B-Wing in all its glory. The ship is as heavily armed as the Y-Wing, sporting three laser cannons, a triple ion cannon and 12 proton torpedoes, however, it is a lot more agile

B-WING

STRIKE BACK AGAINST THE EMPIRE WITH THE REBELS' SECRET WEAPON, THE B-WING.

by Alex Simmons

PRODUCT
B-Wing

SOFTWARE HOUSE
LucasArts

PRICE
£19.99

REQUIREMENTS
DOS 5 or above, 2Mb RAM, 386(+33MHz)
256 VGA, Original X-Wing game

SUPPORTS
Joystick (Recommended), Mouse, Soundblaster, AdLib, Roland and GMIDI Sound Cards

LUCASARTS has firmly established itself in the PC market, with its highly successful point-and-click adventures and also X-Wing, the space combat game based on the Star Wars Trilogy. B-Wing, like Imperial Assault, is an expansion disk for the original X-Wing and is based, unsurprisingly, around the rebels' heavy-assault starfighter, the B-Wing.

As B-Wing is just an expansion disk, there is very little change in terms of presentation, with all of the front-end graphics and bases remaining identical. However, B-Wing does include a new set of historical missions, the fifth tour of duty and obviously the new B-Wing spacecraft. Existing pilots from the original can be still be used, but also included is LucasArts' very own veteran, TopAce 4. Here you can fly all the missions from the previous games, by entering the historical combat simulator. Also featured are six new B-Wing missions, including attacks on Imperial frigates and the Death Star trench run.

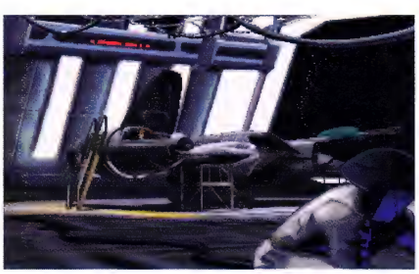
The new tour of duty is where you'll find most of the action, with over 20 different missions which follow on from Imperial Pursuit. Not all of the new TOD missions are flown in B-Wings, sometimes you return to the X-Wing and other rebel spacecraft to continue the endless struggle against the Empire. In addition to these missions, B-Wing features three all-new cinematic sequences which appear at key points in the game, accompanied by even more digitised speech. Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia also make appearances!

B-Wing offers more missions than the previous Imperial Pursuit and many hours worth of flight time with the new tour of duty. Although 20 quid may seem expensive for an expansion disk, in my opinion it's worth the money. While most of the game seems identical, the option to play all the other historical missions (there are loads of them) is great, and obviously the new ship adds a fresh lease of life to X-Wing, which was superb in the first place. The cinematic scenes are merely a bonus, as are the brief appearances from Luke and Leia. Be warned though – the missions aren't easy. If you're still struggling with X-Wing, B-Wing may be a little out of your depth.

SCORE ★★★★

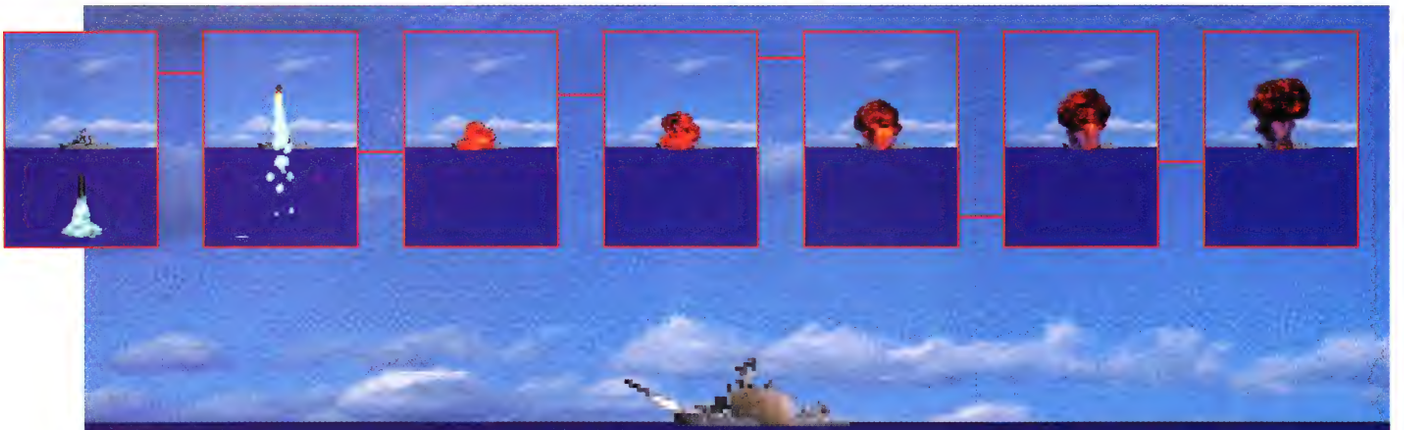
REVIEW

In the fifth tour of duty, the first mission is undertaken in an X-Wing, with the objective being to protect the six prototype B-Wings under construction in space



There are three new cinematic sequences in B-Wing, including gorgeous shots of AT-AT walkers, a heck of a lot of Imperial troops and even Luke Skywalker

The cockpit of the new starfighter is neatly laid out and easy to understand. All the gauges, read-outs and damage reports are clear and easy to see



THE SEQUEL TO 688

ATTACK SUB EMERGES

by

AT LAST.

John

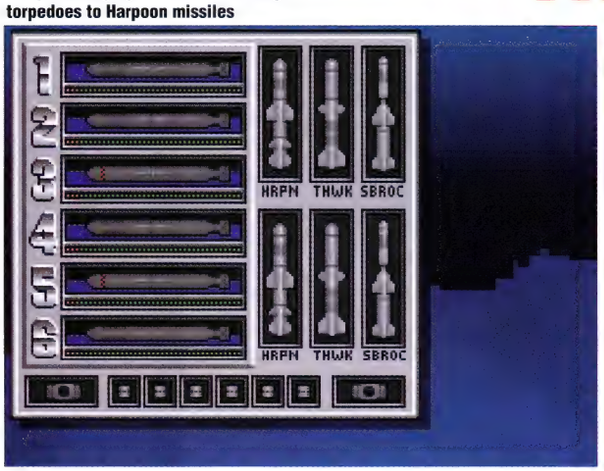
WILL IT CAPTURE THE

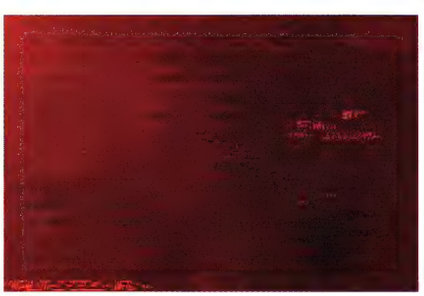
Davison

STYLE OF THE ORIGINAL?

SSN-21 SEAWOLF

The Seawolf has an impressive array of weapons ranging from wake-seeking torpedoes to Harpoon missiles





PREVIEW

THE original 688 Attack Sub was a storming success when released a few years ago, and Electronic Arts maintains that it has been one of the company's biggest selling titles to date. It's inevitable then, that the sequel would emerge sooner or later.

Based on the prototype SSN-21 submarine, Seawolf is a speculative simulation of marine warfare in the near future. Coded by John Ratcliff, the author of the original 688 game, and produced by veteran simulations man Paul Grace, this title is being touted as the most advanced and innovative submarine simulation ever released.

As with many other recently released sims, the background to Seawolf has been thoroughly researched in order to create something as realistic as possible. Apparently the US Navy combined five major projects to establish the Seawolf class submarine. The original 688 specification was combined with the new SSN SUBACS (Submarine Advanced Combat System), attack sub R & D as well as a new submarine electronic system. The result was to become what the US Navy described as the 'fastest, deepest diving, most heavily armed United States submarine ever put to sea', with at least three times the mission effectiveness of its predecessor. Carrying Harpoon, Sea Lance and Tomahawk missiles along with mines, Mark 48 ADCAP torpedoes and a new conformal array sonar, it's potentially the most powerful attack vehicle in naval history.

Unfortunately though, due to budget cuts at Naval Systems Command, the pattern of modern warfare and the changes in world politics, the scale of the project has been reduced and has thus remained on the drawing-board.

PRODUCT
SSN-21 Seawolf

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Electronic Arts

RELEASE DATE
November

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb Ram, 386, VGA, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster 8/Pro/16, Adlib, ProAudio, Gravis, Ultrasound, Roland Sound Cards

Many of the in-game graphics look absolutely gorgeous. This sunset creates a superb atmosphere for a naval battle at dusk. There are a large number of such scenes ranging from atmospheric stormy weather to brilliant sunshine

The story behind the game sees the Seawolf in active service in a scenario where Red Army generals have exerted extreme pressure on the Eastern bloc nations threatening their military stability. As a result of a military coup, the newly formed Politburo declares the reunification of the USSR and the severing of all relations with the West. At the same time, a coup in Cuba deposes Fidel Castro and a US recognised government seizes power. As border skirmishes break out along the perimeter of the USSR, a Soviet task force sails from Archangel bound for Cuba, with strict orders to avoid nuclear confrontation...World War III has begun.

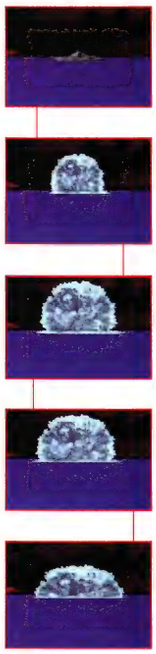
As you can imagine with a scenario such as this, the potential for strategic gameplay is absolutely enormous. The game's developers have managed to cram an enormous amount of detail into the product and it seems that a novel approach to the subject has been taken. Whereas old sub sims such as Silent Service II and 688 Attack Sub have relied on traditional methods, Seawolf makes far more use of sonar. By using some clever stereo sound techniques the game introduces a whole new perspective into simulated sub warfare.

More than 40 surface ships and 25 submarines have been incorporated into the sonar simulation, each with its own distinctive audible signature presented very cleverly in stereo when used with an appropriate sound card. Over 100 samples have been used in the game to represent everything from sonar pings to whale songs.

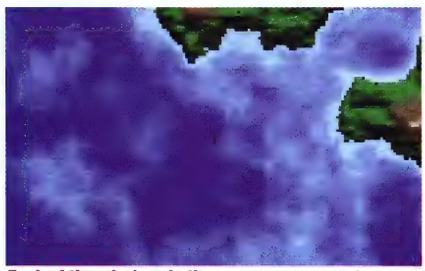
It's not just the sound that's pretty fancy though, the graphics are really rather special as well. The waves ebb and undulate just as you'd expect them to, while all 65 of the game's vehicles have been accurately rendered and reproduced as scalable 3D models which look just like the 'real thing'.

SSN-21 Seawolf has been in development for some considerable time now, but we have been assured by the software house, Electronic Arts, that it should be complete within the next month or so. Hopefully we shall be able to bring you a full review, along with some comments from a real naval commander in next month's issue of PC Player. ■

"AS BORDER SKIRMISHES BREAK OUT ALONG THE PERIMETER OF THE USSR, A SOVIET TASK FORCE SAILS FROM ARCHANGEL BOUND FOR CUBA, WITH STRICT ORDERS TO AVOID NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION...WORLD WAR III HAS BEGUN"

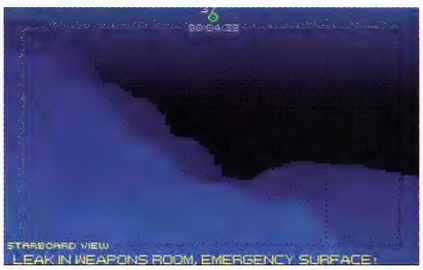


BEHIND THE SCENES

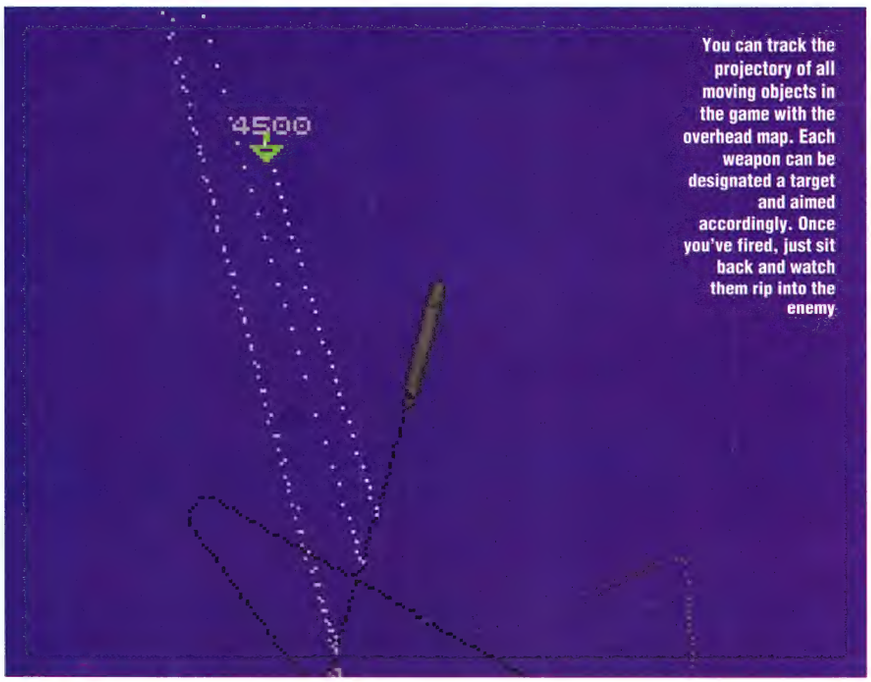


Each of the missions in the game covers a vast area. The initial planning stage of a mission is all performed from a zoomable map

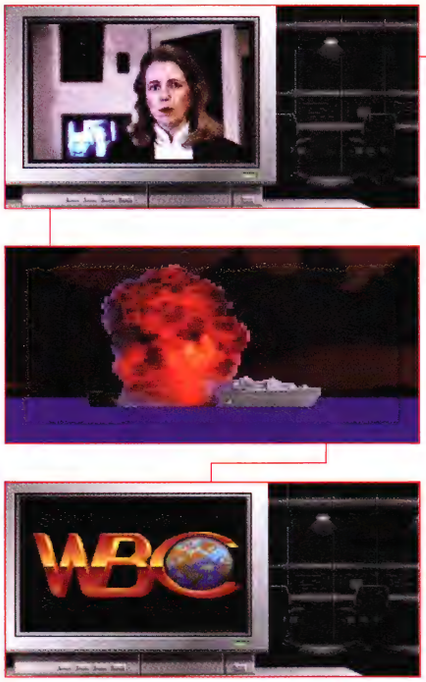
The weapons officer reports on any situation which arises. Digitised speech is used extensively throughout the game



Run too deep and you'll also have to deal with the possibility of running aground. The 'outside' view lets you see the sea bottom in all its craggy glory



You can track the projectory of all moving objects in the game with the overhead map. Each weapon can be designated a target and aimed accordingly. Once you've fired, just sit back and watch them rip into the enemy



A form of action replay is available by activating a WBC news report. A full commentary is available along with close-up views of any recent action. Check out the explosions, are they impressive or what?

PREVIEW

ULTIMA VIII PAGAN

THE ULTIMA SERIES DRAWS TO A CLOSE IN THIS, THE FIRST GAME IN THE FINAL TRILOGY.

By John Davison

Many of the creatures are absolutely enormous and create the menacing feeling which many RPG monsters fail to evoke

Auto-combat and turn-based combat is now out of the window due to a far more arcade-like system having been implemented

PREVIEW

PRODUCT
Ultima VIII: Pagan

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Electronic Arts/Origin

RELEASE DATE
January

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 4Mb Ram, 386, VGA, 30Mb Hard Disk, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland Sound Cards

AFTER numerous outings, the quest of the Avatar against the forces of the Guardian is finally drawing to a close. As any Ultima fans out there will no doubt remember, the Guardian has forced the Avatar into a different realm, putting him into a situation where there is no way home. If you've played the recently released Ultima VII part two: Serpent Isle, you're maybe wondering what the significance of the giant red hand which tears the Avatar away is. The answer is here and ready for release at the beginning of next year.

The prospect of a new Ultima RPG is always a pleasurable experience. While establishing themselves as the most advanced adventure games around, the series has set new standards in play-engines and graphics systems. As each new title arrives with a new interface, extra facilities are

The Elementals are extremely important in Pagan. It's not until you have quashed the threat of each god that you can truly take on the Guardian

The new creatures are not only vicious, but also look far better than anything found in previous titles

provided for the player. So what can we look forward to seeing this time?

The changes found in Ultima VIII are actually quite dramatic. While many previous revisions have merely been refinements to an already superb system, Pagan alters the whole look and feel of the game. The most obvious change is the fact that the view of the action has altered drastically, replacing the previous system with a new, skewed perspective playing area, resulting in the new game looking sharper with a far larger visible active area on each screen.

Overall graphic quality has changed quite significantly as well. Characters are now larger (the rendered creations which roam the Guardian's realm all look superb), and many boast up to 400 frames of animation, while the Avatar himself has almost 1,200 frames devoted to his motion. With all of this movement it has been possible for the team to create characters with individual characteristics and mannerisms. Each character behaves in a distinct manner which helps to prevent the 'crap monster plod' which tends to crop up in most RPGs.

Beyond this, a great deal of attention has been paid to the 'physics' of all movements. Thrown objects now follow correctly calculated projectories, while spherical objects will roll just as you'd expect them to. The overall aim has been to create something far more real than anything previously seen in other RPGs.

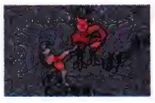
The final change to the presentation of the package has been to the sound. Samples have been cleverly tinkered with to produce a four channel digital effect allowing you to hear multiple weapon clangs, screams of agony and roars of magic at once.

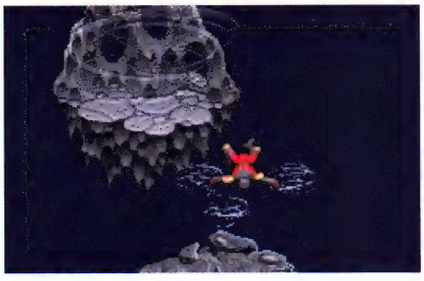
Many players complained about the sluggishness of Ultima VII, and to address this problem Richard 'Lord British' Garriott and his team have developed a far more action-based interaction system. Both turn-based combat systems and auto-combat have been taken out and replaced with a real-time battle system which is far more arcade-like in style (Eek...let's hope it's not TOO arcade-like). To supplement this, many of the extraneous non-player characters have been reduced to produce a far more 'personal' approach – although you have people tagging along on your quest, you are now in far more control of your own fate.

"BOTH TURN-BASED COMBAT SYSTEMS AND AUTO-COMBAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT AND REPLACED WITH A REAL-TIME BATTLE SYSTEM WHICH IS FAR MORE ARCADE-LIKE IN STYLE"

The Avatar's activities have also been added to. Not only can he walk and attack (like in all previous games), he can now jump in different directions and climb as well. During combat these new moves add greatly to the speed of the game and add the much-needed realism to the system.

On a more technical front, the new system has also been enhanced to be far more friendly to your machine and your CONFIG.SYS file, as well as to your playing. The Ultima VII memory management system, VooDoo, has been ditched in favour of a far more reliable system which utilises standard EMS and XMS memory managers. Although not especially power hungry (the game seems to run ably on a 386 33MHz), it is fairly memory intensive, requiring 4Mb of RAM and a whopping great 30Mb of hard drive space. People with titchy drives beware...perhaps it's time you bought that upgrade you've been thinking about? ■





The animation throughout Ultima VIII is far better than in any of the previous games. Each motion the Avatar goes through is exceptionally well-rendered

Graphically, the new addition to the series is streets ahead of the previous games

PREVIEW

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ACES OF THE DEEP

AFTER SILENT SERVICE II, SUBMARINE SIMS BECAME THIN ON THE GROUND. SIERRA IS ATTEMPTING TO RECTIFY THIS WITH THE RELEASE OF ACES OF THE DEEP, A WWII SUB GAME.

PAGE 100

PRODUCT
Aces of the Deep

SOFTWARE HOUSE
Dynamix/Sierra

RELEASE DATE
January

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 2Mb, 386, VGA

SUPPORTS
Mouse, Joystick, Soundblaster, Adlib, Roland Sound Cards

THERE was a time when simulations were predominately flight oriented, with air combat sims becoming increasingly popular as the years went by. It's only recently that we've seen a change in this trend with racing sims and, in the last couple of years, submarine simulations becoming available. Dynamix, already known for its 'Great Plane' series (the Aces series, A-10 etc) has decided to utilise the graphics engine and playability from its previous games and incorporate it all into a submarine sim.

Aces of the Deep, as you would expect from the name, follows in the same footsteps as the other Aces games. Set during the middle of WWII, a time when the Germans could conceivably have won the war under the waves, it gives the opportunity to experience just what it would have been like to spend all your time in a watertight can with guns and torpedoes.

Aces of the Deep relies on a more simplified approach to the problems of commanding a submarine than Seawolf, the sub game soon to be released by EA, because it's WWII and there are no complex computer targeting systems available. While this means that getting in a good shot at the enemy will involve more skill on the player's part, it also results in the learning curve of the game being reduced greatly.

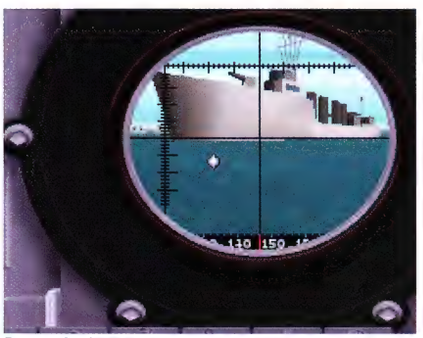
To cope successfully in the war-torn seas, different views can be called up to assist you with such things as target location, navigation, and depth and speed settings. Unlike your average fighter aircraft, it's not simply a case of looking around for the enemy, instead you must use different aspects of the sub's radar and sonar equipment to hopefully find the enemy before they find you.

"UNLIKE YOUR AVERAGE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, IT'S NOT SIMPLY A CASE OF LOOKING AROUND FOR THE ENEMY, INSTEAD YOU MUST USE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE SUB'S RADAR AND SONAR EQUIPMENT TO HOPEFULLY FIND THE ENEMY BEFORE THEY FIND YOU"

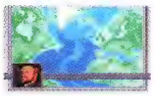
All this is made easy because of the intuitive icon system that the game employs – anyone familiar with the Sierra series of adventure games will feel right at home. Changing from the radar targeting screen to the world map navigation screen involves nothing more than clicking on an icon and putting your plans into action. It is because of this that the game is very easy to play, and even easier to get into.

Games such as this are relatively new, with the last one being Microprose's Silent Service II over two years ago. Aces of the Deep shares the same kind of gameplay as SSII, but brings it up to date with improved graphics and more features. Taking command of a WWII submarine may never have been easy, but with Aces it proves to be a challenging and enjoyable task. Look out for a full review coming up in the next issue. ■

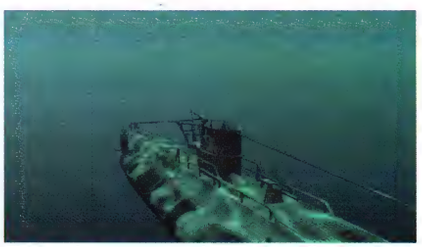
The sinking of non-military ships was frowned on during the war and commanders had to adhere strictly to the rules of engagement. However, in this case it was justified because the ship in question was shipping ball-bearings



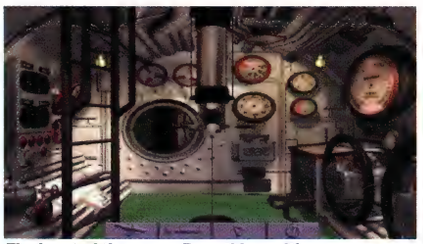
Due to the fact that you are lying 30 feet below the waterline, the only way to see just where you are is to use the periscope



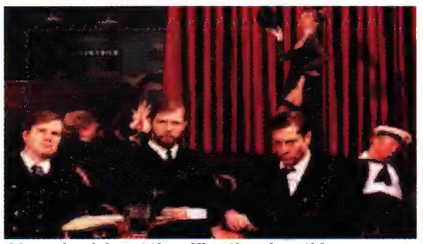
PREVIEW



The opening screen contains some excellent footage of a WWII sub coming towards you. A lot of detail has been crammed into the picture, including fore and aft conning tower guns and periscope protrusions

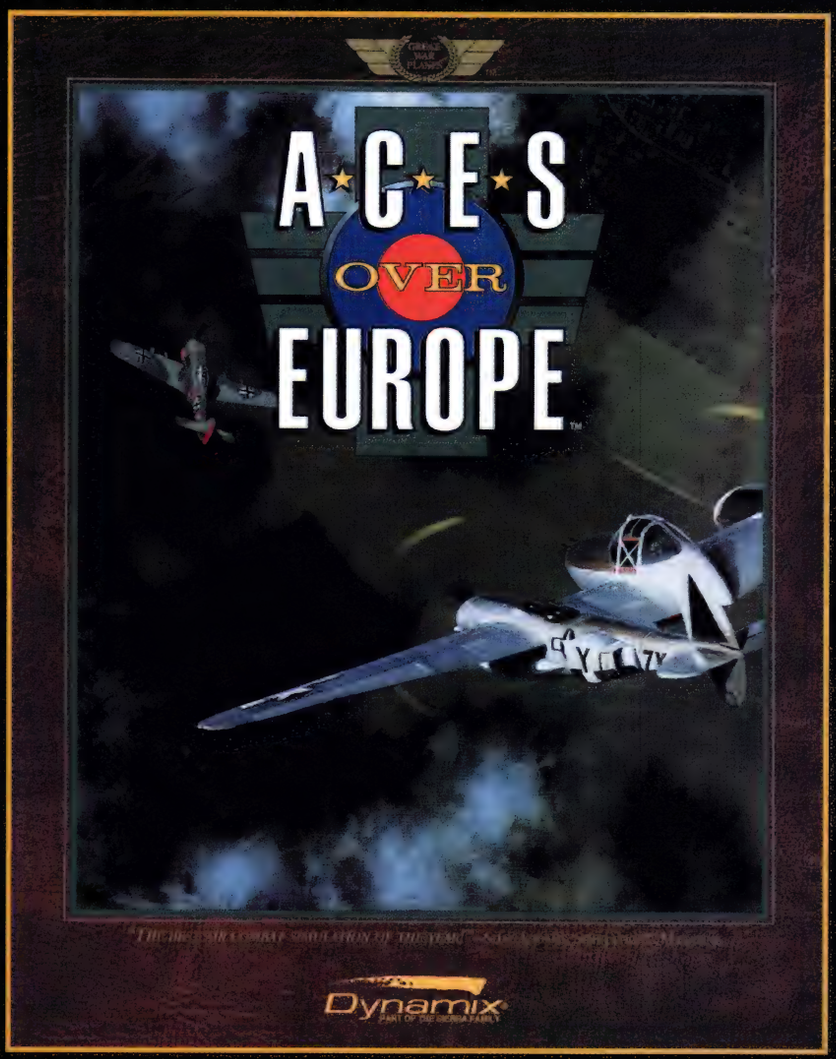


The heart of the game. From this position, you can gain access to all other parts of the vessel simply by making use of the icons located at the bottom of the screen



After a hard day at the office there's nothing a submariner likes better than to unwind with a seductive dance show laid on by the locals. The perks of working for the navy, eh!

4 MISSIONS SUCCESFULLY ACCOMPLISHED ...



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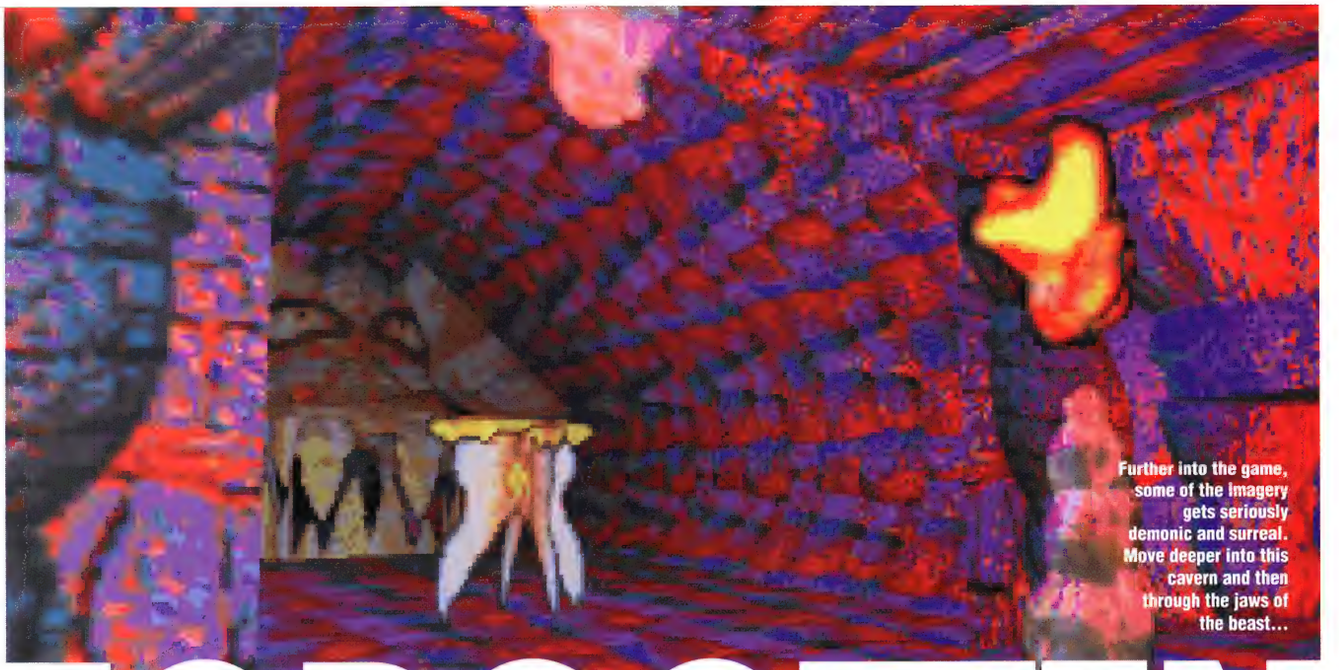
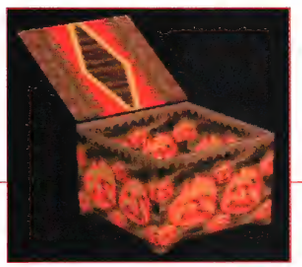
WITH SHADOW CASTER ALREADY IN THE SHOPS AND STONE KEEP DUE AFTER CHRISTMAS, IS THERE ROOM FOR YET ANOTHER 3D RPG?



Further into the game, some of the imagery gets seriously demonic and surreal. Move deeper into this cavern and then through the jaws of the beast...

FORGOTTEN CASTLE: THE AWAKENING



PRODUCT
Forgotten Castle: The Awakening

SOFTWARE HOUSE
EA/Twin Dolphin

RELEASE DATE
February

REQUIREMENTS
Dos 5.0 Min, 4Mb Ram, 486, VGA, Mouse

SUPPORTS
Soundblaster, AdLib, Roland Sound Cards

PREVIEW

THE quality of first-person perspective RPGs seems to be improving at a geometric rate. Just a few months ago, the graphics engine in Underworld II was the single most impressive game system around – now we have a whole host of new games in the wings just waiting to demonstrate what a high powered PC can really do.

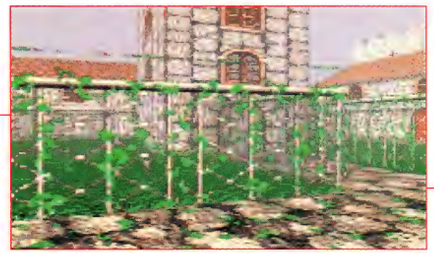
Forgotten Castle is the first game to emerge from the affiliated label of Redwood California-based Twin Dolphin Games and Electronic Arts. Making its début at the summer CES in Chicago this June, the game has already received an enormous amount of praise for both its superb graphics and amazingly fluid scaling and scrolling.

Subtitled The Awakening, the game is actually the first in a proposed series based around a foundling prince by the name of Tris. The game begins as Tris learns at his mother's deathbed that his father is the true King of Alonia and that he is missing, presumed dead. He also discovers that the family's ancestral castle has been conquered by the foul Ruzakian hordes.

The quest begins as Tris embarks on a mission to discover the fate of his father and liberate the castle from the evil demons which now inhabit its hallways. The game is divided into 10 levels which will take Tris from the streets of the city, to the winding passageways of the castle and finally deep within the catacombs deep beneath Alonia.

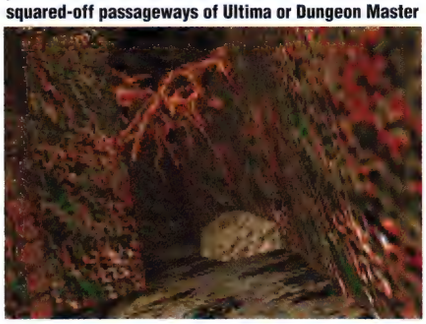
The aim of the mission is for Tris to battle his way through the numerous levels of evil creatures which block his path, before finally conquering the evil

"MAKING ITS DÉBUT AT THE SUMMER CES IN CHICAGO THIS JUNE, THE GAME HAS ALREADY RECEIVED AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PRAISE FOR BOTH ITS SUPERB GRAPHICS AND AMAZINGLY FLUID SCALING AND SCROLLING"

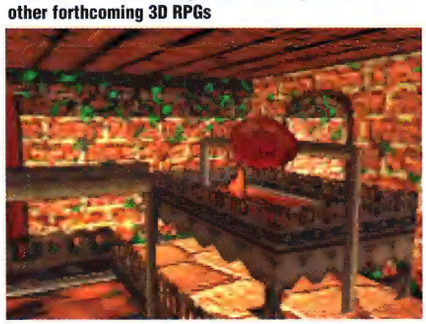


The streets of Alonia have all been wonderfully rendered with an enormous amount of detail. Each building is unique and many of the roadways are bordered by foliage

Unlike many games of this style, some of the caverns and passageways are actually tilted. This manages to produce an effect far more natural than the clinical squared-off passageways of Ultima or Dungeon Master



Each bunk in this dorm is rendered with as much detail as any other element in the game. It's this level of detail which sets Forgotten Castle apart from all other forthcoming 3D RPGs



Unlike many previous 3D RPGs such as Ultima Underworld, many of the passages in Forgotten Castle are irregular shapes – this presents a far more realistic impression of the 'virtual' world

Ruzakian overlord. Much of the game is combat based, but Twin Dolphin is eager to publicise the fact that the 'plot' to Forgotten Castle is actually non-linear and players can explore any area of the land of Alonia to perform sections of the overall task.

OK, it may not be the most original scenario ever dreamed up, but what Forgotten Castle lacks in storytelling panache, it more than makes up for in game features. For a start, it employs an action-based interface which actually allows players to embark on Tris' missions without the obstruction caused by tedious icon bars and on-screen controls – every action in the game can be activated by simple keystokes coupled with mouse control. As with Stone Keep from Interplay (previewed in issue one) this system allows for a much more action-based game which runs as fast as possible. Although it may sound a little too simplified when described here, we have been assured that the game offers all of the magic and object manipulation offered by the most complex RPGs around.

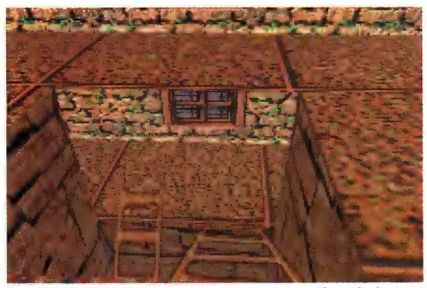
Obviously, the single biggest selling point which Forgotten Castle offers is the exceptional graphical effects which appear throughout the game. Every location is fully rendered in 3D to provide an exceptionally realistic and natural-looking environment through which the player can wander. Supplementary scenery is provided in the shape of texture-mapped polygons, such as furniture and even light fittings! These added touches provide an incredible perception of both depth and perspective.

Many of the locations are absolutely huge and manage to convey a true feeling of scale. The open dining room in the castle is one of the biggest furnished rooms in the game

Unfortunately (for some) this enormous amount of detail means that Forgotten Castle is a product which will only run effectively on a high-end 486 PC. Shadow Caster reviewed this month (also from EA) is nowhere near as visually complex as FC and even that runs slow on anything less than a 486 25MHz. When we saw the early demos of FC, we were informed that the system being used was a 486DX2 66MHz. This is all well and good, but much of the on-screen movement was limited to a relatively small window. Could we have a game which is simply too ambitious for the hardware that's available?

"EVERY LOCATION IS FULLY RENDERED IN 3D TO PROVIDE AN EXCEPTIONALLY REALISTIC AND NATURAL-LOOKING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH WHICH THE PLAYER CAN WANDER"

Although initially scheduled for an October release, Forgotten Castle is now intended for release in February or March 1994. This is approximately the same time as both Dungeon Master II and Stone Keep. What will emerge victorious – the pedigree of DM or the visual excellence of Forgotten Castle or Stone Keep? ■



As you move your character downstairs, the whole viewpoint shifts and everything in the foreground slips slightly out of focus. This creates an impression of depth unlike anything seen before on the PC

PREVIEW

A STORY OF WOMEN, SHEEP AND FLATULENCE UNCOVERED FOR YOUR GAMING PLEASURE.

FREDDY PHARKAS

FRONTIER PHARMACIST

FREDDY Pharkas is a devious game. In fact, it's downright MEAN in places, so we've whupped this concise players' guide into shape to help you out with a few of the harder parts of the game.

Guides for this particular kind of adventure are very difficult to put together without giving too much of the game away. Rather than produce a complete walk-through solution (which would undoubtedly please Sierra with the game having only been on the market for a couple of months!), we thought we'd go for a hint-based guide complete with a couple of skeleton solutions. Happy shootin'!

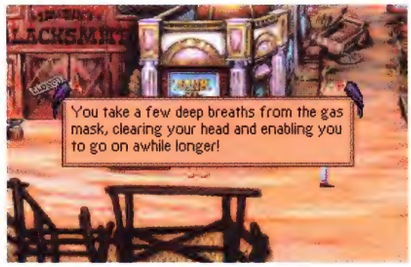
ACT I

The first act is simple enough, so you'll be able to work it out for yourself. If you are stuck trying to purify the town's water, then try a few different things with the ladder and the rope – you never know, they may help you reach the top of the water-tower...

ACT II

Act II is a beast to fathom out. The flatulent horses are about to asphyxiate the entire town and it's up to you to find the appropriate wind-repellent! But what will help you breathe more easily? Tunes? Lockets? No, but a gas mask just might do the trick.

To make one of these you're going to need a bean can and an ice-pick for starters, followed by a handy leather strap and a smattering of charcoal. Put them together and take a deep breath.



Next you must find a cure for the horses' trumpfoolery by taking a sample of their emissions and testing it in your lab. Once you've discovered exactly what the horses have eaten, you can prepare the appropriate cure. If you're stuck here, nip off and collect the paper bag from the store and get yourself a methane sample.

STAMPEDE!

A snail stampede threatens the town and you have only a week and a half to prevent certain doom!

First of all, go and buy a beer from the saloon. Next you're going to need something to open the bottles with. Finally, take the opened bottles and pour the beer on the...hold on, work that out for yourself, it took me long enough to find out!

SIDEKICK SRINI

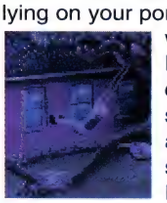
To help your jolly sidekick from the anthill you'll need a small ladder from somewhere. Don't worry, finding the ladder is child's play (handy hint!).

PLAYERS' GUIDE

LIGHT MY FIRE

A fire next to the pharmacy endangers my business. Put out or get out, that's what we say.

Upon exiting the pharmacy you will notice numerous sacks of baking soda lying on your porch. Taking one of these would be a good idea.



Drop the sack on the correct side of the see-saw ("But which side?") and climb onto the swing. Keep clicking on Freddie to make him swing higher. At the right point he should fly onto the school roof. The next step is easy...

ACT III

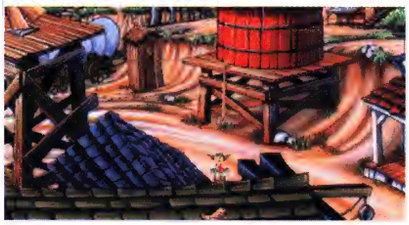
The first thing you need to do in act III is to get the safety deposit key from the graveyard (dig for success) and return to the bank. Here you will find your long-lost shootin' irons. You'll need to clean and load them before you practice any fancy shooting, so try offering tasty gifts to the sheriff for a few helpful items.

The next bit is hard. You need to make a replacement ear from Srini's silver medal (found hanging in the pharmacy). Show it to Whittlin' Willy and pinch his knife. Get some clay from the graveyard and some wax from the church. Return to the pharmacy and use the knife, clay and wax to make an ear mould. Melt the silver medal and use it on the mould.

CHEAT!

Sort out the card cheat by grabbing the third arm at the right moment. When he pulls out his gun, try shooting the foot rail instead.

ROWDY COWHANDS



The trick here is to stay away from the front of the saloon (use back entrances to all the buildings). Get the French postcards from the knocking shop – give them to the barber and he will give you the nitrous oxide.

To get rid of the cowhands, you must...erm, take a look at the picture.

FANCY SHOOTIN'

When you're surrounded, you are then given the chance to prove your shooting skills. Take out the baddies, but not the goodies (Obvious?).

When Kenny arrives you will both shoot it out. Even if you draw first, you still end up losing your other ear. Staunch the flow of blood to save your NECK (hint, hint).

PENELOPE PROBLEMS I

Inside the classroom you should; (i) Do as you are told, and (ii) Deflect the bullet with something nearby.

PENELOPE PROBLEMS II

If you could reach that discarded silver ear, you might be able to cut the ropes with it.

EN GARDE!

Hell hath no fury like a woman with a scimitar. Do as Penelope does, but select the sword and keep clicking it on her.

EAR PIERCING

Kenny discovers Freddy and Penelope in a compromising position and is naturally rather disgruntled. Only one thing will prevent your sudden and certain death, but I'm not going to tell you what that is. Sorry! ■

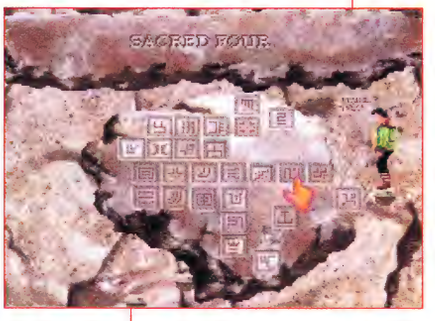
HEIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW LEAVES ALEX ALL WASHED UP IF HE CAN'T RESCUE HIS BELOVED CASSIMA. By PC PLAYER Alex Simmons CAN HELP, BUT WE WON'T HOLD YOUR HAND ALL THE WAY THROUGH!

KING'S QUEST 6

COMPILED below are tips for the trickiest puzzles in King's Quest 6, for example the solutions to the Logic Cliff riddles and how to thwart the Vizier's evil genie. You'll also find a list of objects needed in the game, along with where to find them and what they do. If you ever get stuck, the first rule of adventuring is never give up. Keep looking around, revisiting locations in the hope of finding something new – you'd be surprised how often this happens!

THE LOGIC CLIFF RIDDLES

Puzzles one, three and five are easy if you consult the manual. **The second and fourth traps are harder. Select the symbols for the word SOAR to make the steps appear**. To solve the fourth riddle, choose the symbols for Azure, Caterpillar, Tranquillity and finally Air.



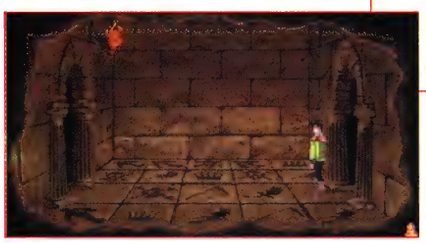
VIZIER ALHAZRED'S GENIE

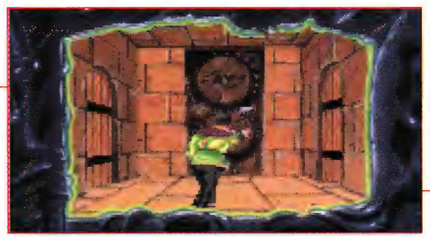
The Vizier's genie appears in many different forms throughout the game, tempting Alex in the hope of killing him. The genie will appear as the old robed man in the pawn shop, the young boy taking a swim in the sea, the gardener in the Beast's garden, the old woman on top of the Logic Cliffs and the young winged-woman in the catacombs. Ignore him each time and Alex will survive intact. **The genie can mean the difference between completing the game or making the long journey into the Realm of the Dead, so watch him closely**. Remember, he loves mints and hiding in his lamp.

PLAYERS' GUIDE

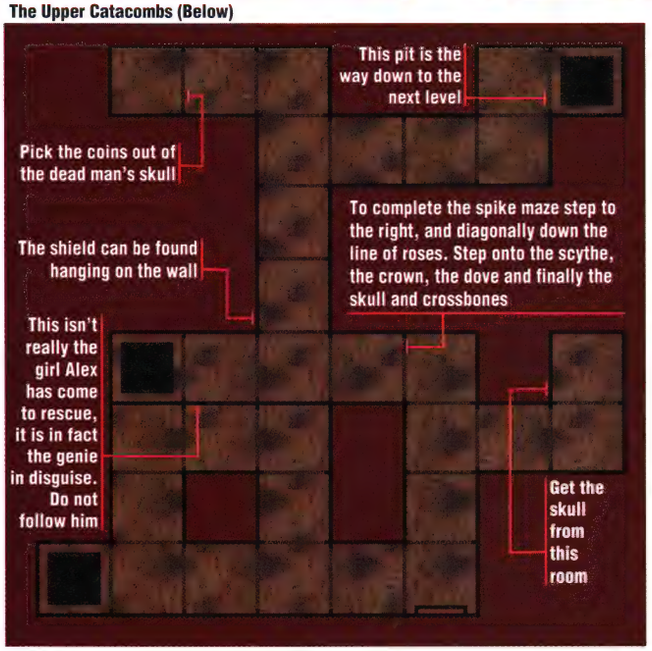
THE CATACOMBS

The catacombs is the labyrinth of rooms where the Minotaur dwells. To succeed in defeating the man-beast, Alex will need the following items in his inventory before returning to the Sacred Mountain for a second time: the red scarf from the Queen, the hole-in-the-wall, the tinder-box and the brick from the Beast's garden.

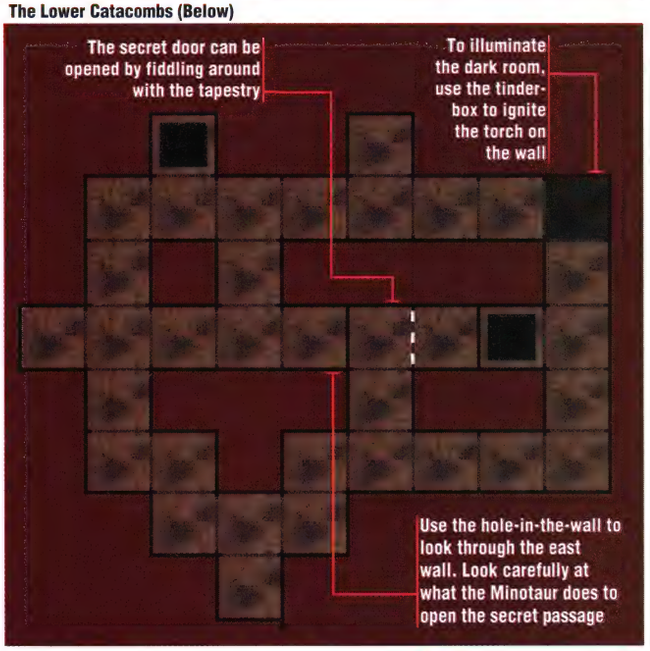




The Upper Catacombs (Below)


This pit is the way down to the next level
Pick the coins out of the dead man's skull
To complete the spike maze step to the right, and diagonally down the line of roses. Step onto the scythe, the crown, the dove and finally the skull and crossbones
The shield can be found hanging on the wall
This isn't really the girl Alex has come to rescue, it is in fact the genie in disguise. Do not follow him
Get the skull from this room

The Lower Catacombs (Below)


The secret door can be opened by fiddling around with the tapestry
To illuminate the dark room, use the tinder-box to ignite the torch on the wall
Use the hole-in-the-wall to look through the east wall. Look carefully at what the Minotaur does to open the secret passage

USING THE SPELL BOOK

King's Quest can be competed without using any of the spells, although they must be cast to score maximum points with a different ending. Here's how the spells are used:

MAKE RAIN

Get the sacred water from the oracle, the baby's tears and the water from the fountain and mix them in the hunter's lamp. Cast the spell, then visit the druids on Mist Island. They'll take Alex hostage and string him above the fire. When the lamp gets hot, the skies will open and it will pour with rain, dousing the flames and allowing him to grab the burning embers.

ENCHANT CREATURE OF THE NIGHT

Get the skull from the catacombs and with it scoop up the burning embers on the Isle of Mist. Add to this a strand of hair from Cassima's ribbon, then climb to the top of the Logic Cliffs where Alex will find the flying horse, Nightmare. Cast the spell on the dark creature before the hot embers cool off. Nightmare will take Alex to the Realm of the Dead.

MAGIC PAINT

Get the black feather from the bottom of the Logic Cliffs. Next, scoop up the swamp ooze with the teacup and finally add the gooey water from the River Styx. Mix with the feather and then use the brush from the pawn shop to paint a door on the side of the castle. **Cast the spell and a door will materialise.** ➤

ISLE OF THE CROWN

ALEX'S DAVENTRY RING
Alex's ring can be found on the beach. Show the ring to the castle guards so they let Alex past. Trade the ring in at the pawnshop to get the magic map. The clown in the bookshop will only talk to Alex if he shows him the ring, which eventually must be given to Cassima's nightingale, Sing-sing.

DAVENTRY COIN
Also found on the beach. Swap the coin with the pawnbroker to get the nightingale, brush, tinder-box or flute.

INCRIMINATING LETTER
The letter is found inside the chest. Show it to Captain Saladin before attacks.

DULL BOOK
Pick up the dull book from the bookstore and read it to the oyster on the beach.

MINT
Pop the free mint from the pawnshop into the big-tongued gnome's mouth when he comes to taste Alex.

FLUTE
Play the flute to the sunflowers in the Garden of Wonders.

PAINTBRUSH
Another object from the pawn shop. Use it with the magic paint mixture to create a door in the side of the castle.

TINDERBOX
The tinder-box lights Prince Alexander's way on Isle of the Sacred Mountain, illuminating the caves behind the nightshade bush and the dark room inside the catacombs.

DISAPPEARING INK
Grab the ink bottle from the junk the pawnbroker throws out. When the all-seeing gnome appears on the beach on Wonder Isle, smother Alex with the ink.

SPELL BOOK
Found in the bookstore. Exchange the magic book for the rare book given to Alex by the bookworm.

PAGE FROM POEM BOOK
Examine the love poems section in the bookshop and a page will fall from one of the books.

RIBBON
Sing-sing will bring Cassima's ribbon after Alex has given the nightingale his ring. Examine the ribbon carefully to get the strand of hair needed for the 'Charm Creature of the Night' spell.

RABBIT'S FOOT
The lucky rabbit's foot is found inside the ferryman's boat. Use it on the gnome with large hands.

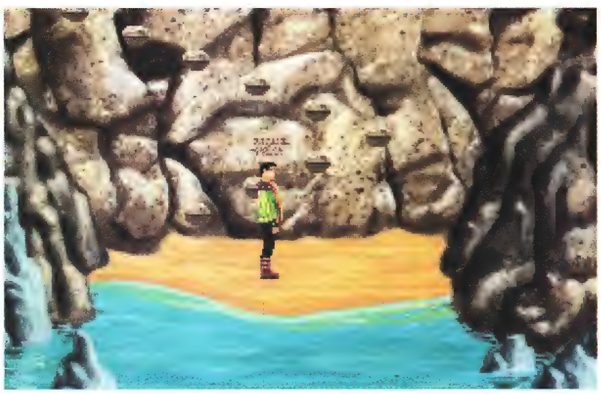
GENIE LAMP
Swap the hunter's lamp for the genie lamp after the 'Make Rain' spell has been cast. Use it at the top of the palace tower to trap the genie.

NAIL
Found on the top floor of the palace in the alcove, holding up the picture. Use it to unlock the chest inside the Vizier's bedroom.

SWORD
In the final battle against Alhazred, grab the sword from the tower wall and attack the Vizier.

WIND-UP NIGHTINGALE
Use the clockwork nightingale to befriend Sing-sing (Cassima's nightingale) and to fool the gnome with big ears. Swapped from the pawnshop, the nightingale will also distract the dog guards on the top floor inside the royal palace.

MAGIC MAP
Before Alex can get the map he must talk to the ferryman. Swap the map for the Daventry ring. It teleports Alex from island to island.



ISLE OF THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

SHIELD
The shield from the wall of the catacombs is used to protect Alex from the stone arrow which is fired by the statue in the garden on the Isle of the Beast.

SACRED WATER
The oracle gives Alex the sacred water after he's defeated the Minotaur. It is one of the ingredients for the rain spell.

DEAD MAN'S COINS
Found deep within the catacombs. To cross the River Styx, give the coins to the undead ferryman.

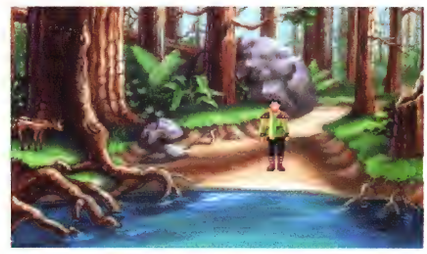
DAGGER
Save the winged-woman from the Minotaur and she'll give Alex a dagger. Give the blade to Cassima to protect her from the Vizier.

SKULL
The skull, found inside the Minotaur's labyrinth, is part of the enchant spell. Fill it with burning embers from the Isle of Mist.

STINKING FLOWER
The stinking flower is found at the foot of the mountains. Use it on the gnome with the incredible sense of smell.

BLACK FEATHER
The black feather is also found at the bottom of the Logic Cliffs and is used as part of the magic paint potion.

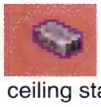
PEPPERMINT LEAVES
Found in the caves at the top of the cliff, the peppermint leaves can be used to confuse the genie at the top of the palace tower.



ISLE OF THE BEAST

WHITE ROSE
Pick a rose from the garden and give it to the servant girl on the Isle of the Crown. This is the only way to befriend her.

DANGLING PARTICIPLE
Lure the dangling creature with the unfinished sentence. Give the creature to the bookworm.



BRICK
Get the brick from the garden. Jam it in the gears when the ceiling starts to cave in the catacombs.

FALLING WATER
Fill the hunter's lamp with water from the fountain to create the rain spell.

BEAST'S RING
The beast will give Alex the ring after talking to him. Convince the servant girl to come to Beast's Island by showing her the ring.

MIRROR OF TRUTH
Beast will give Alex the mirror after meeting Beauty. Use it on Death to make him cry.

SERVANT'S CLOTHES
The young servant girl will give Alex her clothes after meeting the Beast. Use the clothes as a disguise to get into the castle.

HUNTER'S LAMP
Reach up and grab the lamp from the tree and use it to get the baby's tear. Mix the 'Make Rain' spell in the lamp, then exchange it for the blue genie lamp on the Isle of the Crown.

ISLE OF WONDER

UNFINISHED SENTENCE
Pull the sentence out of the water on the beach and use it to snare the dangling creature on Beast's Isle.

PEARL
Grab the pearl from the snoring oyster and give it to the pawnbroker to get Alex's Daventry ring back.

RARE BOOK
Give the rare book, which is obtained from the bookworm, to the book-keeper to get the magic book.

SPIDER'S PAPER
Tap the loose strand at the bottom of the spider's web. When the black widow runs down to repair the web, grab the piece of paper. The words written on the scrap will be needed to solve a riddle on the Realm of the Dead.

SWAMP OOZE
Get the swamp ooze by giving the rotten tomato to the log on the side of the swamp. When the stick-in-the-mud throws the goo back, scoop it up in the teacup.

BOTTLE OF MILK
Snatch a bottle of milk from the swamp and feed it to one of the baby-faced plants. This will make the others cry.

BABY'S TEARS
Collect the baby's tears from the crying plants and scoop them up in the lamp. Another ingredient of the rain spell.

HOLE-IN-THE-WALL
Get the hole-in-the-wall by playing the flute to the sunflowers and grabbing the hole while the flowers are dancing. Use the hole-in-the-wall in the catacombs to spy on the Minotaur.

DRINK-ME POTION
The drink-me potion appears in the Garden of Wonders and must be drunk in front of the old man in black robes inside the pawnshop.

ROTTEN EGG
You need the egg for the enchant spell. Obtain it from the Queen by giving her a piece of coal.

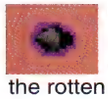
RED SCARF
The queen drops the scarf as she walks away. Taunt the Minotaur with the red scarf.

TEACUP
Found on the chair in the garden. Mix the magic paint spell in the cup.

ICEBERG LETTUCE
Grab the iceberg lettuce from the Garden of Wonders and throw it in the boiling pool on Beast's Isle to cool it down.

The Isle of Mist only appears after Alexander has conquered the catacombs

ISLE OF MIST



COAL
Pick up the coal from the fire and give it to the Queen to get the rotten egg.

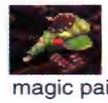
SCYTHE
The scythe is hanging on the tree. Use it to hack through the rose bushes in the garden on the Isle of the Beast.

BURNING EMBERS
Scoop up the burning embers in the skull to mix the enchant creature spell.

REALM OF THE DEAD

TICKET
Talk to the two ghosts and they'll give Alex a ticket. Use it on the undead ticket collector to get into Hell.

GAUNTLET
Grab the gauntlet from the dead knight. Use the gauntlet on Death before he kills Alexander.



RIVER STYX WATER
Collect the River Styx water in the teacup and create the magic paint potion.

SKELETON KEY
Play the bone xylophone at the entrance to Hell to get the skeleton key. Use the key to either escape from the palace dungeon or to open the Vizier's trunk.

HANDKERCHIEF
The ghost mother will give Alex the handkerchief if he talks to her. Give the handkerchief to the boy ghost found within the palace dungeons on the Isle of the Crown. ■

The Realm of the Dead can only be reached by riding on the back of Nightmare, the black Pegasus

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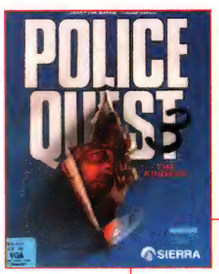

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THE VICTIM: THE PC GAMES INDUSTRY

THE ACCUSED: SVGA GRAPHICS, CD-ROM AND SILICON GRAPHICS WORKSTATIONS

ANGRY

RANTINGS BY THE POISON PEN

YES, it's true, the PC games market is continuing on a downward plummet and things look set to get worse in the next six months to a year. Why? New technology, that's why. The great white hope for the future of games could actually be its undoing. Unreasonable cynical and paranoid rantings? Maybe not.

For the last few years, developers and software houses seem to have been happy producing playable games with high quality visuals which actually draw the player in and keep them hooked. However, as the next wave of technology begins to creep its highly defined features into the market we find that all of a sudden, the gameplay is disappearing.

Silicon Graphics workstations have revolutionised the way we see computer effects in both movies and on television – and now, as the software developers get their mitts on them, it's changing the way we see our games.

The drop in price of CD-ROM drives and SVGA cards has meant that it's now feasible for us to see these fancy new graphics whizzing around the screens of our PCs. They look really flash don't they? To many, it even helps to justify buying all the latest bits of kit, but what's the point? A Silicon Graphics workstation costs a developer thousands and thousands of pounds. Add to this the time it takes to render all these flash graphics and all of a sudden, we're faced with a dilemma – the developers and software houses have spent all of their time, money and effort on a fancy new graphics system. It looks great, but someone forgot to write a decent quality, playable game to bolt them on to.

"MAYBE SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE IS PAYING AS MUCH ATTENTION TO THE GAMEPLAY AS THEY ARE TO THE GRAPHICS. LET'S HOPE SO"

COLUMN

Imagine the scenario...

Software House: *"Well done guys, this is going to sell bucketloads. The graphics are brill. We can get screenshots on the covers of loads of magazines, we'll get stuff on the TV and everyone will say how totally brilliant it is."*

Programmers: *"Yeah, it looks great, but we haven't actually written the game yet, we've just been tinkering with this new graphics thing."*

Software House: *"What? But you've been doing it for bloody ages! What are we paying you for? We can't afford to have you pratting about any longer, this game has to be out in two weeks – what are you going to do matey?"*

Programmers: *"Oh shit. Oh, I know, I'll dig out that crappy old platform game/beat'em-up/shoot'em-up (delete as applicable) and bolt the graphics onto that – it'll only take a few days."*

Software House: *"Brilliant! Here, have a relatively small amount of money for your trouble."*

OK, so I've probably just offended just about every programmer, game producer and software house on the planet, but to the average punter, this is beginning to look like the way things are going. There are a lot of absolutely gorgeous-looking games on the horizon, but that's where it all ends – the looks.

We're hearing all sorts of marketing bravado and hype being churned out by the software houses, boasting 'virtual reality' and 'interactive movies', but it's all a load of tosh really isn't it? The day we see a game that not only looks and sounds superb, but also has the playability to match will be the day that I'm truly happy. Why would anyone want to buy something that just looks nice? Surely people want games – not just flash demos.

So far we've had my old favourite, The 7th Guest which is a bunch of beautifully rendered graphics plastered across two CDs disguising a very poor bunch of puzzle games. Not too far down the line we have Lawnmower Man, which is a puzzle game, platform game and 'flash flying bit' dressed up in SVGA clothing. Then there's Rise of the Robots which is Street Fighter II with rendered sprites (although no one is actually allowed to notice this...it's a totally new kind of thing don't you know!), and next year we've got Chaos Control which is a pre-rendered Starblade rip-off with fancy Silicon Graphics images.

Where's all the originality? Surely new technology should be able to bring programmers' dreams into reality. We should be seeing gorgeous simulations of alien environments, adventures into photo-realistic realms, strategy games which look closer to life than ever before. Instead we're being given an increasing amount of attractive-looking expensive playthings which pale into insignificance against 90 per cent of many ZX Spectrum or C64 games.

"WE'RE HEARING ALL SORTS OF MARKETING BRAVADO AND HYPE BEING CHURNED OUT BY THE SOFTWARE HOUSES, BOASTING OF 'VIRTUAL REALITY' AND 'INTERACTIVE MOVIES', BUT IT'S ALL A LOAD OF TOSH REALLY ISN'T IT?"

If the software houses don't start to get this sorted the next year is going to look very grim indeed. There can be no doubt that things will get worse before they get better, but for a long while the continually expanding PC games market is going to be filled up with even more rubbish than is out there at the moment. Maybe we'll see something revolutionary soon? Maybe someone, somewhere is paying as much attention to the gameplay as they are to the graphics. Let's hope so. ■

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LETTERS

"As a keen strategy, flight sim and sci fi games player, I like to think that my PC is the ideal medium and PC Player obviously recognises this fact.

The idea of no cover disks and a lower price tag is much appreciated – I think paying an extra pound for some demo games is not really worth it. I generally buy magazines for their editorial content anyway."

Joe Ganesh, Chipping Sodbury, BRISTOL

"I wish you the best of luck with your new magazine. PC Player is extremely well produced, has good ideas and is competitively priced. I for one welcome your decision not to include cover disks which I never use and begrudge the extra cost incurred on the price of the magazine."

D H Wheeler, Hurworth, CO DURHAM

PC PLAYER: Not including a cover disk on the magazine was a decision that was taken after a great deal of thought. We reasoned that making the editorial more informative and enjoyable to read would offset the lack of a cover disk, plus this also meant that the cover price could be made considerably lower.

"...PC Player looks excellent. I've left it lying around at work and most people have offered good opinions of it. The thing that I really liked about it was the way you carted in a real pilot to give his views on sims, and a chess expert to comment on the chess program. All that stuff about banking and the nose dipping (I'm talking flying, not some kind of attacking chess opening!), or pulling into a dive and blacking out was great, and really made the flight sim article worthwhile. More of that type of stuff please."

Darren Jones, Upminster, ESSEX

"Dear PC Player,
At last.
Yours sincerely,"

Steve Carter, Deddington, OXFORDSHIRE

PC PLAYER: Thank you.

"I'd like to respond to Stephen Harper's 'Angry' column in PC Player issue one. He says a lot of good things, and he's right in saying that the shortcomings of existing products should be highlighted so that areas of improvement can be identified. However, I do think he's being a little naive in his criticism of corporate behaviour. All companies exist to make money through generating revenue by entering markets in the hope that customers will buy the products or services that they make available. Thus, from a company's point of view, revenue is the most important consideration, with all other aspects taking second place."

Tom Burke, Totley, SHEFFIELD

"...The main topic of this letter is Frontier – Elite 2. I actually have a copy for my Amiga 1200 and realise now that I should have waited and bought the PC version. Firstly, the Amiga version has low detail and is slow, all except for the dogfights which are way too fast!

The protection system of Frontier is also annoying, with constant requests for a letter from the manual. I obviously failed to input the right letter, because later on I was frozen out of the game after a few hours' progress. I find this situation totally unacceptable, as all my efforts had been deleted. I had written over all my old saves with later saved positions, not knowing that the later commander files would be useless because of the software protection."

Martin R Wilson, Yeovil, SOMERSET

PC PLAYER: Elite 2 (reviewed in this issue) has been the cause of a lot of aggravation in the office, for much the same reason. The copy protection is very stringent, and only after talking to David Braben did we find out why (You'll have to read the review on page 42. No cheap clues here!). One thing that should be pointed out is that the word number takes into account bold headings. This is not in the manual and without this knowledge you are going to enter a wrong word every time.

"..Having recently cleaned out the old oak chest to buy a 486sx, it is nice to pay £2.25 for a well-constructed games magazine rather than £4 for the dubious pleasures of thin slippery paper and a cover disk – top marks to PC Player for concentrating on software that fully utilises the PC's capabilities.

As a matter of personal taste, I found the notes on how games are made very interesting, but the 'expert reviewer' comments rather less so. I will doubtlessly modify my opinion should I ever eject from a real F16 at 6000ft!

The feature, 'Is your 386 enough?' was informative, but I feel it would have been more useful had it explained the contributions of clock speed, maths co-processor, video RAM and graphics accelerator cards to specific aspects of gameplay; eg if you walk off the screen in an RPG, what determines the time taken for the new scenery to appear? We serious game players can manage a dose of techno-speak with our sims!"

Nigel Armitage, New Alresford, HAMPSHIRE

PC PLAYER: The purpose of this feature was solely to establish just how much life the 386 had in it as an acceptably powerful games machine. We had heard from various 386 users who were panicking about their machines, especially in the light of all the press speculation surrounding new games and their minimum spec requirements. We decided to get the story from the game designers and software houses themselves, and give everyone the full low-down with info gleaned straight from the horses' mouths, so to speak.

"...Although the space in your magazine devoted to informed reviewing is much appreciated, quite important features are omitted, and I would urge you to look again at what goes in and what is left out of PC Player.

Flight Sim 5, for example – I am sure that you're right to be critical about the fact that the changes since FS4 have not been as substantial as they might have been. However to my mind, you have missed the vital point. The success of FS4 was due to the add-on utilities and scenery disks, including the ability to build aircraft and construct scenery. FS4 scenery add-ons can be used with FS5, and are vastly improved – I wouldn't want to go back to the old program and this in itself justifies buying it. What would clinch it would be to know if the other utilities (aircraft factory, scenery designer etc) were going to be upgraded for FS5, and if so, when they might become available?"

Jeremy Deane, Ringwood, HANTS

PC PLAYER: They are all compatible with FS5, but the graphics are not improved over the original FS4 version. To upgrade the scenery found in FS4 to the bit-mapped images in Flight Sim 5 would require immense amounts of processing power, which would alienate the game to all but DX2 users and above.

If you have any comments, queries or views on PC Player or the PC entertainment market in general, then we would like to hear from you.

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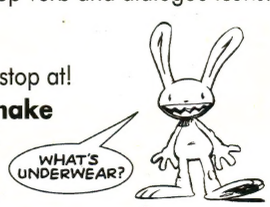

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